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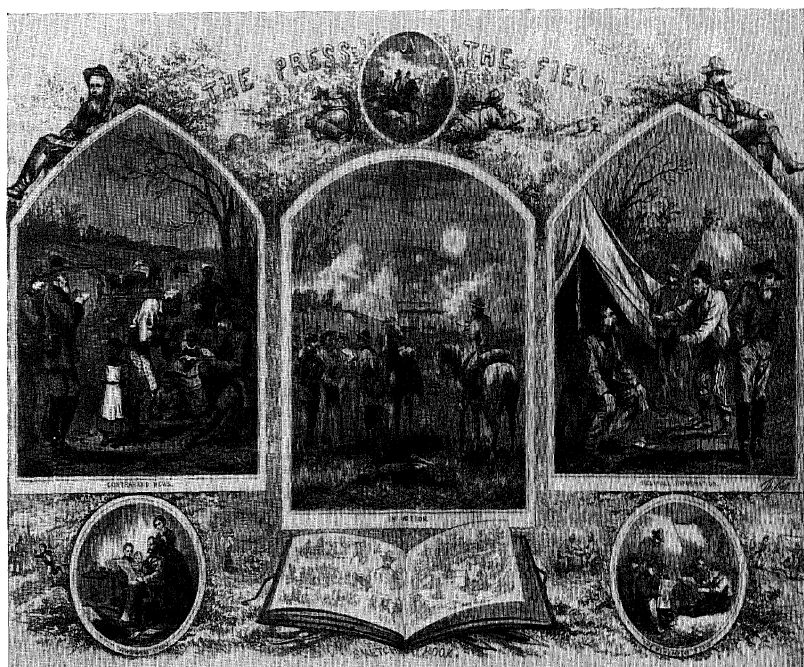
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# Dateline: WASHINGTON

THE STORY OF NATIONAL  
AFFAIRS JOURNALISM IN  
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF  
THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB



Edited by CABELL PHILLIPS and  
Duncan Aikman      Homer Joseph Dodge  
William C. Bourne      William A. Kinney

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC., 1949

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

AT

THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

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# Acknowledgments

The title of Editor of this book is a euphemism; one of those time-honored conventions like dust jackets and Roman numerals that publishers adore, but which are a meaningless nuisance to the ultimate consumer.

This book is a truly co-operative effort, and the credit therefor belongs to many people—to the officers and Board of Governors of the National Press Club; to Joseph H. Short Jr., who conceived the idea in the first place, and the Special Publication Committee, which converted it into a plan; to John Sargent of Doubleday, who worried it along to fruition; and to Louis G. Caldwell and a host of others who contributed advice, suggestions, and criticism.

But most particularly the credit should go to the four men who shared in full measure with the undersigned the arduous job over many long evenings and week ends of actually putting the book together. They are DUNCAN AIKMAN, WILLIAM C. BOURNE, HOMER JOSEPH DODGE, and WILLIAM A. KINNEY. Quite literally this book would not have seen the light of day without them.

Howard L. Kany deserves the exclusive credit for assembling and editing the photographs used in the text.

Mrs. Mae Smith and her competent staff in the National Press Club office cheerfully performed the rather considerable secretarial services which the project required.

CABELL PHILLIPS

*Washington, D.C.*  
*August 1949*

**DATELINE: WASHINGTON**



# An Introductory Note

BY ARTHUR KROCK

Arthur Krock, a product of Glasgow and Louisville, Kentucky, was Washington correspondent for the Louisville *Courier-Journal* as far back as 1910. He has been chief correspondent and news commentator for the New York *Times* since 1927 and is the winner of 1935 and 1938 Pulitzer prizes for national capital reportage.

*"Look at that, Pen," Warrington said. "There she is—the great engine—she never sleeps. She has her ambassadors in every quarter of the world—her couriers upon every road. Her officers march along with armies, and her envoys walk into statesmen's cabinets. They are ubiquitous. Yonder journal has an agent, at this minute, giving bribes in Madrid; and another inspecting the price of potatoes in Covent Garden. Look! Here comes the Foreign Express galloping in. They will be able to give news to Downing Street tomorrow: funds will rise or fall; fortunes be made or lost; Lord B. will get up and, holding the paper in his hand, and seeing the noble Marquess in his place, will make a great speech and—and Mr. Doolan will be called away from his supper at the Back Kitchen; for he is foreign sub-editor, and sees the mail on the newspaper sheet before he goes to his own."*

(George Warrington to Arthur Pendennis during a walk in Fleet Street from Pendennis by William Makepeace Thackeray, published 1852.)



Until the third decade of the twentieth century the reporter who was sent to Washington to represent his newspaper was almost invariably selected from the political staff. The direct route to the capital started with an assignment to report local politics, and the State House was the next station on the line. Everyone on the staff knew that a colleague with this training would fill the first vacancy in the Washington Bureau.

This limit to the area of selection vanished in the early thirties when the patchwork of Versailles began to fall apart and the government of the United States greatly expanded its relation to the financial, agricultural, and industrial economy of the nation, automatically grew vastly in size, and moved inevitably toward a concentration on social welfare problems that was never in the concept of those who set up the republic.

With that development the political reporter's monopoly of the Washington assignment ended and the age of the reporter-specialist in economics, science, foreign affairs, government, history, and military principles began. The college graduate who had majored in one or more of these subjects or whose culture and mental discipline had matured in the general study of the liberal arts appeared in the press galleries as the rule and not the exception.

The good political reporter was not supplanted. A good political reporter cannot become one without that broad training in the collection of news which is the principal foundation of competent and responsible journalism. A good political reporter has deep knowledge of human behavior, and, since governments are only men and women, that knowledge is essential equipment in Washington which the specialist often and palpably lacks. But the depression, the darkening skies abroad, the swift, steady, and huge growth of the home government, and the new and technical nature of its functions required other kinds of knowledge if the public was to be adequately and accurately informed. National-affairs journalism came into being with a scale and range that called for new and sharper tools of reporting and many more of them.

April has been a momentous month in the history of the United States. The Battle of Lexington was fought, Fort Sumter fell, we

declared war on the Central Powers, Franklin Roosevelt died, and Truman became President in that month—a few in its long list of great events. Hence it seemed appropriate to select at random from the years 1913 to 1949 a headline chronicle of the first-page news from Washington in a newspaper of record<sup>1</sup> as an index to the change in government activities and its reporting that is the subject of this book.

The government of the United States in April, 1913, was a small affair, though even in that peaceful era problems of foreign policy distracted the attention of a few politicians from the fevered struggle in the Republican party that produced the Bull Moose split in 1912 and the minority election of Woodrow Wilson as President. Events in revolutionary Mexico and a progressive trend toward aggression by Japan were first-page news from Washington, but domestic matters—the new tariff and currency bills—dominated the reportage, and in it was no reflection of the mounting European crisis that in a little more than a year exploded into World War I and the end of “peace in our time.”

On the morning of April 2, 1913, these readers were informed that William Jennings Bryan, the Secretary of State, would see to it that the elevator men of the department worked only an eight-hour day, however much the Secretary might be obliged to exceed it; that Representative Carter Glass of Virginia would oppose bank guarantees in his bill that was to establish the Federal Reserve System; that William F. McCombs, who had hoped to be Attorney General as a reward for his successful management of Woodrow Wilson's campaign for the Presidential nomination and the Presidency, would accept the Paris post; and that, so far as the Czar of Russia was concerned, he would leave to the United States the initiative of negotiating a new commercial treaty in place of that which President Taft abrogated in 1911 as a protest against Russian treatment of Americans of Jewish faith.

To report these events, as the text discloses, called for the fundamental qualities of good reporting, as all events do. But to none of them was the Washington correspondent of that day required to bring the specialized equipment which, as this story of the

<sup>1</sup>The New York Times.

headlines progresses, it is obvious he now must do. This field was occupied by the editorial page; neither publishers nor readers of the press felt the need of the news columns for background and news interpretation at the source, and the late Frank H. Simonds of the New York *Tribune* was the only contributor from Washington to the daily press who combined spot reporting of foreign affairs with deep knowledge of their origins.

On April 23, 1918, though the United States had been for a year a participant in World War I, the only Washington headline on page one was this:

AMERICANS LOST 200 TO 300

GERMANS 300 TO 400 AT SEICHEPREY

Now note the change as the world and government grow in size and the complexities of their problems increase:

*(April 29, 1928)*

HOOVER IS ENTERED IN WEST VIRGINIA

WORLD COURT ISSUE REVIVED IN SENATE

KELLOGG REASSURES FRANCE ON TREATY

MEDALS FOR FLYERS VOTED IN CONGRESS

COLONEL LINDBERGH HAS FLOWN MORE THAN  
200,000 MILES

BREMEN CREW PAY HONORS TO FLOYD BENNETT

*(April 12, 1938)*

SENATE NAVY BILL COST RISES \$140,000,000

ROOSEVELT PLANS APPEAL TO NATION AS GARNER  
BALKS AT "PUMP-PRIMING"

RAILROAD RELIEF PUT UP TO CONGRESS

CIO FACES BOLT BY GARMENT UNION

*(April 7, 1949)*

ARMY DAY MARKED, THEN IS ABOLISHED TO PROMOTE UNITY

SENATORS REFUSE TO SANCTION CUTS IN FUNDS FOR ECA  
U.S. PLANS NO REPLY TO SOVIET ON PACT  
NOURSE CAUTIONS ON ARMS COST RISE  
ATOM BOMB READY FOR USE IF NEEDED, TRUMAN DECLARES

Thus by 1928 the Washington reporters who fifteen years before were writing of simple political encounters and the perennial dispute over the tariff were being called on to illuminate the complicated legal issues raised by the World Court protocols. By 1938 they were deep in the politics of union labor and the economic disputes over how to conquer the depression and yet retain the free-enterprise system. By 1949 their range of required knowledge had been extended to the intricacies of the Marshall Plan for Western European recovery, of the national budget, and of Soviet-American relations. And among them a group had developed with the capacity to make clear to the casual reader the scientific biography of the atom bomb.

These greater depths and larger horizons of Washington reporting are found throughout the modern newspaper. First-page headlines were cited above to mark their arrival, but it is on the inside pages where they are most tangible. There the specialist makes his larger and more definite contribution; there are the full-length mirrors of the improved and broadened scope of national-affairs journalism. The reason is that important things which actually *happen* or are *said* still dominate the formula of selection for page one.

In reporting the events of government the Washington correspondents continued to deal as their predecessors had done with politics and the human conflicts it evokes and with recurrent official scandal. But when this book was projected their field of responsibility had long since attained the position of news capital of the world. The federal government had long since broken the strings of state jurisdiction that for more than a hundred years confined the welfare and commerce clauses of the Constitution and had in many ways entered the daily routine of every citizen.

The federal government, which until the income-tax law of

1913 was incarnated for the citizen in the sole person of the mail carrier on his route, had become a thousand regulators of his existence who called on him every day. News of its activities had become his vital fare, and this was the established obligation of the press to supply through its reporters in Washington.

The central government that seemed excessively costly at one billion dollars a year was rapidly becoming the forty-two-billion-dollar establishment of 1949.

There are two memoirs by famous editors of the past that help to stress the change which is the subject of this chapter and the occasion of this book. The Washington news scene they review is that of the "Gilded Age," which it was so long. As Washington correspondents and employers of Washington correspondents, Frank M. O'Brien in his *Story of the New York Sun*, and Henry Watterson in his *Marse Henry: An Autobiography*, picture a capital to which the news specialist and analyst of the present day had not arrived.

Charles A. Dana's *Sun* concentrated on Washington news, but its historic "beats" all dealt with official scandal: the *Crédit Mobilier*, a fiscal company organized to build the Union Pacific Railroad in which, it was revealed, senators and representatives had accepted stock; the double payments to contractors which, it was discovered, the Navy Department was making; the "Whisky Ring" by which liquor taxes were avoided (the *Sun's* Washington correspondent who uncovered that signed himself "Sappho"); the ring to collect fraudulent war claims with its slogan of "Addition, Division, and Silence"; the Post-Trader scandal in the Grant administration; and the theft of the Presidency from Samuel J. Tilden, which in its final and "respectable" phase was reported "in semi-editorial style," as Dana directed, by a young man just arrived from the Middle West, Joseph Pulitzer.

Now the great stories and "beats" deal with science, economics, and projections of the governing function, and the reporters who must write comprehendingly of these matters are supplemented by specialists of every description posted here, not in the editorial rooms of the home office. These range from learned commentators whose output is largely informed opinion based on first-hand

inquiry into the facts to the "now it can be told" species whose wares are often imaginary revelation of what goes on in secret conclave.

The contrast between reporting the Washington of the "Gilded Age" and the present capital, as presented by O'Brien's memoir, is equally to be noted in what Watterson recounted of the antebellum city. He was on the staff of the *Daily States*, established in the thirties of the last century by John D. Heiss as an advance over the propaganda sheets for Federalists, Republicans, and most recently for the Democrats, whose leader was Andrew Jackson.

But in one respect modern Washington journalism has a link with the *Daily States*: its editor was a woman, Mrs. June Casneau.<sup>2</sup> She taught young Watterson the trade he was to help make eminent. She fixed nicknames on the great to give them a sense of proportion (for Winfield Scott "Old Fuss and Feathers"). Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri said that she "had more to do than anybody with starting and ending the Mexican War." But one difference between the reportorial obligation of her day and this in Washington is emphasized by Watterson's statement that he was permitted simultaneously to enjoy "a sinecure in the Department of the Interior."

As the Washington reporter evolved into his modern and enormously important public relation the National Press Club, too, passed through its "ringing grooves of change." But whether its abode was an unpretentious set of attic rooms or the fine quarters it now occupies the club has been more than his resort of recreation and ease. It has never been merely a spectator, but always an active element in the progress of American journalism at what has become its focal point. It has noticeably exerted its influence on this progress and expansion and by it has been influenced.

Socially and professionally the club for forty years has been at the center of the daily lives of a substantial majority of the newspaper correspondents in Washington. Its growth in size and prestige has not lagged behind theirs. The editor of this book, Cabell Phillips, well says that "the bars, lounges, and dining tables of the National Press Club have been a kind of alchemist's retort

<sup>2</sup>As was the late Eleanor Patterson of the *Washington Times-Herald*.

in which thousands of Washington stories have been distilled, synthesized, or even induced out of the thin but susceptible air."

Hence the National Press Club is the genetic begetter and sponsor of this book, conceiving it as a valuable compilation in any case, but useful, moreover, and even essential to all newspaper workers; and more importantly to public understanding of the development of one of the great auxiliaries of the democratic system.

# Prehistory

BY DUNCAN AIKMAN

Duncan Aikman, a newspaperman of wide-ranging assignments in the United States and Latin America, has made Washington his headquarters since 1935. He is the author of *The All-American Front*, a study of inter-American problems, 1940, and *The Turning Stream*, a book on the United States in transition, 1948.

In the late spring of 1800 the roads leading south from Philadelphia carried a microscopic trickle of extra traffic. The capital of the United States was moving from the first metropolis—population 41,220—to a shaggy, unfinished swamp settlement in the Potomac Valley called Washington. And exactly one hundred and thirty-one people, plus family and servant retinues who came along with various misgivings, were moving with it. As of the moment the one hundred and thirty-one constituted the entire central bureaucracy of the federal government.

The swamp settlement promptly justified misgivings by treating the invaders to a series of heat waves and a housing shortage, both not unknown even in the Washington of today. Clerks and office underlings shackled up in half-finished boardinghouses, unable for months to send for their families. Secretary of State John Marshall ran the republic's foreign affairs for weeks from the guest chamber in the home of a hospitable friend.

Hardly less irksome to the higher public servants, the new capital news-wise practically dropped off the map until mid-autumn. Miffed at the transfer and concentrating on home-front Presidential-year politics, the Philadelphia press sent no correspondents along with the exodus. In the new "federal district" the



Alexandria, Virginia, *Advertiser* and the Georgetown *Centinel of Liberty* turned a fishy cave-dweller eye on the national statesmen, treating their comings and goings as minor eighteenth century social items.

Then suddenly more or less out of saddlebags and sloop holds, a capital press corps was mobilized. Two Virginia partisans of the outgoing John Adams administration moved the Richmond *Federalist* to Georgetown in September and began publishing it as the Washington *Federalist*. A young intellectual protégé of Vice-President and shortly President-elect Thomas Jefferson, Mr. Samuel Harrison Smith of Philadelphia, fished his presses out of a shipwreck on a lower Potomac sand bar and by the end of October was publishing the tri-weekly *National Intelligencer*, with the *Universal Gazette* for a weekly edition. Before the year's end Mr. James Lyon, son of an obstreperous Vermont congressman recently jailed for violating President Adams's Alien and Sedition Act, was in the field with a weekly modestly named *The Cabinet of the United States*. Georgetown's *Centinel of Liberty* overcame cave-dweller introspections and became *The Museum and Washington and Georgetown Advertiser*.

The country's first statesmen have not been forced to perform their labors under clouds of painful obscurity since.

The capital's first working press, however, had little time to dream of organized craft sociabilities or certainly of press clubs. Printer's devils doubling in brass for reporters included, it could hardly have numbered a dozen members. And, except for young Mr. Smith, who had social connections and the lion's share of the Jefferson administration's printing contracts, it led for more than the first twenty years a strictly unglamorous, not to say drab life.

Washington—population thirty-two hundred in 1800 and thirteen thousand in 1820—was a Bingville, and its early newspapers were limited to early Bingville *Bugle* standards of operating income. Their hopes of national circulations were promptly frustrated by the pleasant old custom of free "exchanges." Editors of hinterland journals at no profit to Washington journalism covered their national politics by waiting for the capital press to arrive by

stage mail, clipping and reprinting its columns with or without credit.

The federal district's circulation opportunities proved almost equally delusive. Close to two thirds of the Washington-Alexandria-Georgetown population of fourteen thousand in 1800 were slaves and white illiterates, and reader interests were divided besides. Georgetown's and Alexandria's cave dwellers were as bored with national politics as if the capital had been in Boston or Savannah. The swamp settlement's growing cluster of federal bureaucrats and transient congressmen were equally bored with the local district issues and personalities.

Under these hazards a national capital's news budgets simply added to the working press's headaches without improving the wage scales. And from the beginning the news budgets were voluminous.

In Washington's very first winter the House of Representatives, owing to a tie vote in the Electoral College, spent a week and thirty-six ballots electing Thomas Jefferson President, with threats of disunion and violent political coup constantly breathing down the necks of the lame-duck congressmen. Then the new President was off with a legislative program as repulsive to his enemies and exciting to his friends as Mr. Roosevelt's later New Deal innovations. In the middle of it he fought two wars with the Barbary States pirates and chose to double the size of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase.

Years of complicated diplomatic wrangles with the European belligerents in the Napoleonic Wars followed, ending in the War of 1812 and the burning of Washington by the British. In 1819 the Republic saw its first major business depression and in the next year some violent preliminaries to the slavery struggle in the debates over the Missouri Compromise. By that time the capital press corps had seen practically all the known brands of news except airplane and train wrecks, totalitarianism and nuclear physics.

Yet almost in proportion to these momentous assignments the newsmen were underpaid, overworked, and lacking in job security. And it seems doubtful if they were much more numerous

in 1820 than they had been in 1800. None of young Mr. Smith's original competitors survived Washington's first ten years, and their successors of the early 1820s were hanging doubtfully on the vine.

Even in technical proficiency only one innovation had been made. By 1802 Mr. Smith, who knew some pre-Gregg system of shorthand, had crashed the House and Senate as a one-man press gallery and debate reporter. And when in Mr. Jefferson's second term he hired Mr. Joseph Gales Jr. of Raleigh, North Carolina, to report the Senate's proceedings for the *National Intelligencer*, the working press's first symbol of social protocol blossomed. Twenty-one-year-old Mr. Gales shared Vice-President George Clinton's snuffbox.

Otherwise early Washington was a journalistic backwash. Philadelphia's newspapermen in the 1790s had improvised a faintly bohemian literary atmosphere around the works of Charles Brockden Brown and a few early novelists, and in the next decade New York's group had produced young Mr. Washington Irving's circle and the *Salmagundi Papers*. But none of these excitements could be imported to a Potomac swamp by young men who rarely knew where their next meal was coming from and who were classified by the local gentry, political and otherwise, with the creatures that lived in the woodwork.

Even the corps's own impresarios shrank from identification with these grim states of underprivilege. "The best way of getting business," wrote the bride of the *National Intelligencer's* editor within a few weeks after her arrival in Washington, "is by way of being generally known as being connected with the most respectable people."

The Smiths were on their way toward becoming bankers.

And as late as 1835 a pen-pricked United States senator was still fulminating against the working press's abysmal lack of human dignity. "Miserable slanderers, hanging on to the skirts of literature," he decried them, "earning a miserable pittance by their vile and dirty misrepresentations of the proceedings here."

The generality was only mildly rebutted. But already the press corps's fortunes were modestly improving.

Actually the change had been going on from the time of America's only strictly free-for-all Presidential contest—the campaign of 1824. The struggle lasted two years. There were five candidates. The final election was thrown into the House of Representatives. And all these excitements peculiarly centered in Washington. All the candidates—three Cabinet members, John Quincy Adams, William H. Crawford, and John C. Calhoun, House Speaker Henry Clay, and Tennessee's redoubtable junior senator, General Andrew Jackson—were the capital's official residents. Washington was their politicking, brawling, and propaganda headquarters.

A rising national reader interest reacted to the situation as to a dogfight. Within two years the capital press corps more than doubled in size and probably more than tripled its operating scope.

Adventurous young men drifted into town to satisfy the craving of metropolitan and hinterland editors for news slanted to the local political passions by writing a new kind of journalistic communication called "Washington letters." Others arrived to take jobs on a new kind of newspaper which suddenly bloomed in the backwash—the candidate's "personal organ." There were three of them by early 1824. From New York, Philadelphia, and Boston editors and top reporters came down to survey the scene and its tensions, and sometimes stayed on with indefinite assignments.

At the climax of the battle in the House of Representatives' election of the President in February, 1825, some of the more sensitive statesmen complained that the intrigues and spying of "hordes" of newspapermen were interfering with the performance of their solemn duties. Visiting firemen included, the "hordes" may have numbered forty journalists.

Then at once General Jackson's outcry was raised that Mr. Adams' election had been procured by "bargain and corruption," so that for all practical purposes the 1828 campaign was launched before President Adams could be inaugurated. The "Washington letter" specialists dug in and as the decibels of party violence mounted found more copy to write and more clients to serve than at the peaks of the dogfight.

It was still anything but a lavish life for the working press, but

it was moving out of the village-slum classification. In a town where board and room at the swank Indian Queen Hotel cost thirty-five dollars a month, free whisky and brandy included, the young man who disposed of three or four Washington letters a week at prices ranging between three and five dollars could afford to be prominently in circulation. The beginner with a small-time job on a Washington newspaper and a few rustic editors willing to pay a dollar apiece for occasional letters could definitely hang on.

With the relative prosperity a certain gusto crept into press operations and traces of a corps morale. In 1827 Mr. Russell Jarvis of General Jackson's *United States Telegraph* chose to consider himself insulted at a White House reception by the President's son and secretary, John Adams. He retaliated shortly by publicly pulling the offender's nose in a Capitol corridor. When an angry Presidential message demanded a Congressional investigation, at once a crew of expert press-corps lobbyists swung into action. Mr. Jarvis suffered no specific disciplines.

Soon, too, a new tone of piquant irreverence at the expense of the scene and its actors appeared in copy from Washington. President Adams's "very name," reported the New York *Enquirer's* Mr. James Gordon Bennett in 1828, "would freeze a pair of the most juicy Potomac ducks." The airs of rival politicians greeting each other at White House receptions suggested "Mephistopheles' politeness to Faustus." "On he goes," was the Bennett tribute to an Adams leader in the Senate, "creaking and croaking like an ungreased cartwheel." "A girl from the West," seen at one of Secretary of State Clay's Wednesday evening home gatherings, was "endeavoring to appear with the most rueful ease in a cantelo tightened to suffocation."

Then General Jackson moved into the White House, and Washington's national news importance swelled and widened. Political spoilsmen raided a thousand government jobs, and a Cabinet broke up over the compromised bride of a War Secretary. A fiery and colorful President beat down nullification of the federal laws in South Carolina and fought a battle to the death with the Bank of the United States and the young republic's first big-money

interests. Congress seethed with the raucous beginnings of a thirty-year struggle between slave and free states.

With such news marvels to work on the writers of the "Washington letters" shortly found that their products were not good enough. Editors wanted spot news of what the rambunctious Old Hickory administration was up to, and they wanted it ahead of their competitors. Within a year or two some of the better-heeled large city newspapers were hiring special couriers to get it into their offices faster than the oft-delayed mails. By the end of the Jackson regime in 1837 the leisurely letter writers were being converted into recognizable spot-news correspondents.

Along with this rather basic change in news values a series of technological revolutions occurred. By the turn into the 1840s the railroads were carrying news dispatches from Washington to Philadelphia and New York at frightening speeds of thirty miles an hour. Mr. Bennett, now owner of the spectacularly successful New York *Herald*, thought so much of the innovation that in 1841 he established—at the venturesome cost of two hundred dollars weekly—the first fully-staffed Washington bureau of reporters, with a courier service to take their copy to the home office "on the cars." His competitors, the New York *Sun* and Mr. Horace Greeley's brand new *Tribune*, were modestly following the example.

The spot-coverage experimenters cut their eye teeth on the Tyler administration's long struggle over the annexation of Texas. Then, just as Washington became the home-front news center of the war with Mexico, the "instantaneous" electric telegraph was added to the correspondent's working kit. The couriers vanished into technological unemployment. By the time the final debates over the slavery and secession issue hit their stride in the mid 1850s the big news of the capital was crackling out over the wires hardly less efficiently than in the 1940s.

The Washington press corps thrived on all these changes, although it grew rather more slowly than might have been expected. Local staffs included, it is doubtful if it numbered much more than fifty in 1860, and only a handful of salaries exceeded one thousand dollars. But members of today's National Press Club

could have recognized its correspondents as authentic fellow craftsmen.

Definitely, too, the press corps was out of the social woodwork. Certainly its star members got around. As a matter of reporting routine and informal protocol they had been crashing White House receptions and "at home" evenings of Cabinet and Congressional leaders since the days of the first correspondents. In a time before interviews were invented and office visits to the great were somewhat discouraged some of the slicker craftsmen developed eminent gifts for cultivating the confidences of political hostesses. Beside straight news gathering they used these connections to keep meticulously abreast of the capital's personal gossip—who was in gambling, dueling, or woman trouble, and who was taken home in his cups last night and when and by whom. Now and then to feed the scandal appetites of a nation of passionate partisans innuendos or juicy exposures of such matters appeared in print.

Yet in the midst of all these activities—no doubt considerably because of them—the press corps during its growing-pains stages developed no organized social life of its own. Probably it felt no need of one.

For Washington was still a small town—forty thousand in 1850; sixty thousand in 1860—just dreaming of its first horsecars. Hardly more than a hundred of its public servants, Congress included, counted regularly as important news sources. All of these worked, and most of them lived, in what is now the city's downtown shipping and hotel district. An active reporter by dropping in at a few cabinet offices near the White House in the morning, looking over the Congressional sessions in the afternoon, cruising the Pennsylvania Avenue bars for friendly politicians in the early evening, and topping the night off with some statesman's "at home" festivities could in a single day see practically everything and almost everybody that the entire Washington beat offered.

Then on a raw April morning in 1861 a news flash came up the wire from the South: Fort Sumter was under Confederate bom-

bardment. On the capital press corps's doorstep the biggest news story of American history had been deposited.

Thereafter for several months Washington was a clutter of improvisations. In the White House President Lincoln was improvising a war policy. In the near-by Potomac swamps the government was improvising an army. The manager of the city's five-year-old Associated Press bureau, Mr. William Lawrence Gobright, and the energetic Mr. Bennett from New York were improvising out of the capital's livelier legmen and a few expert political reporters a crew of amateur war correspondents.

Indeed at the height of the excitements the press corps seems to have improvised its first recorded group festivity. A small inner circle of members plus a few hedonistic spirits of the incoming Lincoln administration organized themselves as the Bold Buccaneers and gave a dinner for Mr. William H. Russell of the *London Times*. Mr. Russell, who six years before more or less had invented the art of war correspondence in the Crimea, was in town surveying the military state of the Union, which he found distinctly gloomy.

Late in July he rode out with the native amateurs to a battle called Bull Run in Virginia and found it gloomier still. Even the amateurs failed to distinguish themselves. Most of them left the bloodletting in its early preliminaries and galloped back across the Long Bridge from the Confederacy with assurances that a crushing Union triumph was won. Finally, when one of Mr. Gobright's more persistent young men arrived in advanced state of battle neurosis, but with the full news of Yankee rout and panic, the story never left the telegraph office. General Winfield Scott, a venerable War of 1812 veteran temporarily in charge of the Republic's military effort, had simply seized the wires.

The government had improvised a censorship.

In the autumn and winter things began to shake down. Washington was at one and the same time a war front, GHQ for the nineteenth century's largest combat armies and the news and political capital of a crisis.

Upon the sleepy old southern village a raw, overcrowded population of a hundred thousand and then of a hundred and forty



thousand superimposed itself. Soldiers on leave from the Army of the Potomac and its ambulant wounded swarmed the streets, loafed, and brawled in the barrooms. In stenchful improvised hospitals the convalescent and dying bedded. Within less than a hundred and fifty miles raged the major fighting of the war's eastern theater, and chronically until late 1864 the menace of enemy raid or capture hovered.

At the Capitol and in smoke-filled hotel rooms the new leaders who had taken over the government quarreled over the war's aims, policies, and scandals as flamboyantly as slavery and anti-slavery elements had quarreled in the 1850s. In the White House sat a President in the mysteries of sheer personality more colorful than Jackson.

The best and the worst of American journalism flocked to the city to report the concentrated news melodrama. Editors and established writers of the country's metropolitan press came to interpret the scene in ponderous think pieces and editorials. Brilliant young men from hinterland small-time newspapers moved in to cover the battles—at thirty-five dollars a week and pay-your-own expenses. Between campaigns they merged with the Washington press corps to cover the national politics and occasionally to romanticize the new politicians and generals in charge of the Republic's rocking destinies in the rich Victorian corn of early human-interest stories. Foppish young men and a very few young women, an advance guard for twentieth-century society columnists, were intermittently on hand to glorify social glamors and scandals.

In effect the Washington wartime beat was serving as a kind of shakedown cruise in the techniques of modern journalism. And in one department after another of the melodrama's coverage a degree of order slowly appeared.

The lessons of Bull Run sufficiently seasoned the war correspondents so that in General McClellan's 1862 campaign in Virginia most of them stayed on with their battles until they reached approximate news climaxes. On the capital's political front the working press developed a news nose for war-contract scandals. In the winter of 1861–62 their proddings played a part in ousting

the distinguished graft patron, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, from the Lincoln cabinet.

Soon the more whimsical journalists were sharpening their sense of humor on the capital's wartime bawdries. When a discharged lieutenant colonel was tried and convicted of being co-keeper of a bawdy house a full press gallery was present, and the *Washington Star* and *National Republican* were charged with reporting the case with "reprehensible gusto."

Even the society reporters, no doubt unconsciously, at moments developed traces of instructive function. Between gushes representing Mrs. Lincoln as a "republican queen . . . in the calmest repose of her noon of beauty," they made it clear that her extravagances were compromising the President and that Washington, flush with war and real-estate profits, was gallivanting far more ostentatiously than the drama going on behind its hospital walls warranted.

But in all the press corps's struggles the toughest bout was with censorship. Early in 1862 Lincoln's new Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, took the operation in charge and for the next two years made General Scott's seizure of the wires during the Bull Run nightmare seem like a casual error of judgment.

Mr. Stanton, a neurotic and dictatorial lawyer-bureaucrat who habitually referred to newspapermen as "hounds," staffed his censors' bureau with army officers chosen chiefly for their allergies to news values. Copy both from the army fronts and the Washington GHQ was cut to ribbons or to gibberish or held up for days merely because it was troublesome for the censors to clear their bottlenecks. Newspapers were suspended and barred from the mails, editors and reporters were fined, threatened with jail sentences, and otherwise disciplined for minor infractions of rules which the censors had dreamed up but had not bothered to announce.

Major news developments were often stored on the Washington front for inexcusable periods. The New York *Tribune's* Henry Villard, back with the first full story of the Union debacle at Fredericksburg in December, 1862, was invited to tell it to President Lincoln, but was barred from the wires until slower reporters

had scooped him. The AP's Gobright after twenty-four hours of argument with the censor was permitted to send the first authenticated news of Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania on the eve of Gettysburg only as an "it is said" half rumor.

Eventually, however, these constant suppressions produced in the press at large such crops of garbled guesswork and word-of-mouth reports of the war operations that Mr. Stanton himself sickened of his system. In the spring of 1864 he began issuing unexpectedly factual daily communiques and piped down his censors' copyreading operations on news that was officially permissible. The long and dismal battle had ended in something better than a draw.

Then the southern fronts collapsed, an assassin's pistol cracked in Ford's Theater, and the press corps's ordeal of training by melodrama was over.

The armies disbanded, the generals took off their uniforms and became politicians, the more celebrated war correspondents became editors. But no postwar deflation struck Washington's news fronts. The war had expanded circulations, left bigger and more prosperous newspapers in its wake, and immensely sharpened the public's news appetites. Now for several years these were more than adequately fed and stimulated by the tantrums, eight-hour-a-day oratory, and passionate battles of the statesman over southern reconstruction and the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson.

So in the 1867 Congressional press galleries there were forty-nine registered correspondents. A noticeable minority was on better than fumbling terms with prosperity. Salaries were rising indeed toward peaks which for two or three celebrities in the 1870s were to pass \$12,000.

In mildly spendthrift atmosphere the impulses which had produced 1861's Bold Buccaneers revived. "To secure the advantages of organization and for the cultivation of fraternal sentiment" an inner press-gallery group in the spring of 1867 organized the Washington Correspondents' Club, with the AP's Gobright as president.

Its fraternal sentiment apparently was cultivated in a walled

garden. Barely half the correspondents corps appears to have been "elected" to membership, and Washington's local newspaper staffs—now close to one hundred strong—were definitely excluded. The situation was made no better by the fact that the club chiefly displayed the advantages of organization by projecting a series of exclusive annual dinners.

Not unnaturally, organized upper-echelon sociability produced a social cleavage, and the Washington local staffers retaliated. In September "quite a number of 'knights of the pencil,'" as the aging *National Intelligencer* coyly described them, held an enthusiastic meeting and formed simply a Press Club. But evidently the organizing gesture satisfied. After languidly electing the *National Republican's* John C. Proctor president the new brotherhood died of initial oversights. It failed to establish a meeting headquarters or to collect any dues. Then the Correspondents' Club withered away of something like lack of purpose, and the corps passed to the next sixteen years without the benefit of any social organization at all.

The fact is that the newsmen's post-Civil War social impulses were being satisfied by an informal and dueless institution which made club life largely dispensable. The institution was Newspaper Row. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, apparently because it gave easy access to statesmen relaxing in Willard's Hotel bar and parlors, all but a few incurably high-minded correspondents moved into an agreeable rookery of old-fashioned offices on lower 14th Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and F Street.

Here on the site of the present National Press Building a concentrated craft social life developed in an atmosphere of happy anarchy. A continuous round of interoffice visitations went on, flavored with trades in news tips and background information, bottle hospitalities, political arguments, and considerable draw and stud poker. In inner conclave solemn decisions were made as to which statesmen were temporarily to be disciplined with the silent treatment. In 1872 a plot was hatched there which sent a delegation of correspondents to the Republican National Convention to defeat the renomination of Vice-President Schuyler Colfax—an early "used to be a newspaperman myself" type of

politician who had offended by bottling up news of senatorial investigation of the Grant era's graft scandals. Newspaper Row's prestige was sharply increased by his retirement to the lecture platform.

From its portals correspondents rushed in packs to hunt down embarrassed or otherwise newsworthy statesmen at Willard's. They formed more or less constant dining and drinking arrangements with each other in the neighborhood's less expensive bistros. Over the years the quarter developed its peculiar institutions. Around the corner on E Street Gerstenberg's German beanery became "Gerstenberg University," with rituals of academic gibberish to propitiate its two chop-lusting mastiffs and to initiate visiting firemen and press-corps novices into the mysterious civilities of ordering "steak mit onions."

Meanwhile the corps's working pressures grew with Newspaper Row's sociabilities. With cheaper wire services and larger newspapers, the correspondents year after year cultivated more news sources for material for fuller and more detailed stories. New forms of news presentation were improvised and polished. In 1866 the Cincinnati *Commercial's* James B. McCullagh had invented the direct quotation interview. In the next decade leading statesmen occasionally could be seen climbing rickety stairs to the Row's principal bureau offices bent on curious negotiations. They had learned that for interviews of peculiarly high political voltage metropolitan newspapers sometimes would pay as high as one hundred dollars.

From time to time new gadgetry equipment added to the working day's complexities. By the early 1880s a very few corps neophytes were clattering away at a disturbingly noisy, fast-copy-producing mechanism called the typewriter. A year or two more and in the more progressive offices bells were ringing and voices were shouting into a doubtfully reliable new wall gadget—the telephone. In the evenings the one at the White House was answered by President Cleveland personally, and a press corps tradition has it that once a daring young journalist won a five-dollar bet by ringing him up and asking him what the news was. The executive answer is not recorded.

Meantime a second Washington Press Club was launched in 1883 and automatically it found itself in competition with an extremely full life which the press corps already was leading. It did clear a few hurdles. It avoided rankling distinctions between correspondents and the Washington local press in its membership requirements, and in some rooms behind the Baltimore *American* offices at 1410 Pennsylvania Avenue it set up a meeting headquarters. At the peak of its fellowship it held a moonlight steamer excursion on the Potomac—probably a benefit.

But Newspaper Row's happy anarchy had favored the development of egos, and soon the new club was awash with temperamental troubles. Marplots objected that the Baltimore *American's* Frank Truesdell was at once its chief organizer, its treasurer, and in a sense its landlord. Beefs were registered apparently without justification that the news confidences of befuddled members now and then appeared in the Baltimore *American* as exclusives. Treasurer Truesdell on his part was equally distressed by the negligence of fellow members in paying their drink and refreshment bills and eventually even the rent. By 1887 the club was dead of these frictions, leaving its debts and considerable rancor behind.

Midway in the languid liquidation the first Washington newspaper club destined to last was founded—the Gridiron in 1885 with Ben Perley Poore, a Jovianly bearded ancient who had been around town since his childhood in the John Quincy Adams administration, for its first president.

Originally limited to forty members—later generously expanded to fifty—the Gridiron was designed not to meet the press corps's mass sociability problem, but to be a kind of Skull and Bones of the Washington local campus. Nor did collegiate overtones stop there. As the name implies, the Gridiron was also projected as a group of Merry Andrews at whose semiannual dinners ruling political celebrities and issues would be broiled over lambent flames of vaudeville horseplay, a good deal as often happened to faculties in the uproarious eighties on senior class "high jinks" night.

Over the club's sixty-four years invitations to these frolicking

fiestas have come to be as hungrily sought after by publishers, financiers, statesmen on the make and in retirement, and by similar breeds of publicans and sinners as whisky prescriptions were during Prohibition. Meanwhile the public relations facilities enjoyed by the membership have made the Gridiron possibly the best advertised newspapermen's club on the planet.

Nevertheless its birth did not still the longings of Washington's working press at large for a communal social life when a few years later a bargain was offered. Early in 1891 the furnishings and equipment of a moribund Sports Club, maintained by a few Congressmen at the apex of Newspaper Row at 14th and E streets were for sale at a sacrifice. The statesmen evidently had gone in for table and brass-rail sports rather than athletics, and the appointments were adequate to the point of stylistic lavishness. A National Capital Press Club was formed to take advantage of such an entry to swank and splendor, and shortly eighty-five members moved in to live the lives of gentlemen of distinction.

At last all the omens for a happy ship appeared propitious. Membership climbed above one hundred, names nationally known in journalism gave prestige to the officers' roll, distinguished visitors sought guest cards and lounging privileges, and the club's annual dinners shortly were competing in glamor with the six-year-old Gridironers'. Members deserted "Gerstenberg University" and Newspaper Row's lesser hash houses to eat delicate dishes prepared by their own chef's staff and to drink the artfully-concocted mixtures of their own bartenders.

Such charms of the social atmosphere proved all the more attractive indeed as it developed that nobody really had to pay for them. Being an association of gentlemen by definition, the National Capital Press Club extended unlimited credit. At long intervals individual members would be posted for non-payment. But either the situation was met with a partial remittance, or the account had swelled to such appalling proportions for newspaper incomes that the victim merely retired to "Gerstenberg University" with his dues in default.

So gradually deficits became an obsession—and then a perpetual headache. First they appeared in hundreds, then thousands.

Heroic measures were tried, but with each collection crisis membership again fell off. Finally—ultimate in salvage operations—a vast troupe of New York's leading theatrical entertainers came down on a free special train for a benefit performance. The seven thousand dollars which their efforts netted melted in the 1894 deficits. The bar, the plate, the silver, and the lush late-Victorian furnishings were sold at auction. Organized press-corps social life was bankrupt.

But the anarchy into which it reverted was less happy than before the brief era of fellowship and, as an expanding press corps overflowed Newspaper Row into office buildings all over the city, more diffused.

In the early 1900s Washington's newsmen were fumbling for a formula: How to organize a newspaper club whose members would pay for their fun as they found it.



## From Such a Bond

BY SCOTT HART

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On a May afternoon in 1908 that section of F Street about seven blocks east of the White House was quiet in the sunshine of a drowsy Washington spring. Men and women, mostly of career-government families, moved casually along the sidewalks, pausing occasionally to talk or to nod amiably to acquaintances. For Washington then was about the size of Louisville or Seattle today, and it had that charming community consciousness that makes people know each other and enables them certainly on pleasant spring days to nod amiably even to strangers.

To them everything was familiar, secure, and, perhaps, enduring. They knew their town and so many of the faces. They were even inured by now to the disturbances of the automobiles that backfired and fouled the air so much, but which in God's good time would pass, no doubt, as all unnatural things do.

Then suddenly a crowd of men surged about the sidewalk in front of the jewelry store on the street floor of the three-story structure at Number 1205 F Street. They stood talking, laughing, and looking up the narrow flight of steps leading to the apartments above. Soon from somewhere a mound of furniture grew as in strange evolution from the concrete. And then they started with the burdens up the steps.

The strollers stared.

One man, unmistakably the chief of police, heaved at a piano;

they sweated up with chairs and tables that plainly came from second-hand surroundings. They somehow mounted the stairs with an enormous bar. And eventually, as toward the satisfying of some mysterious and impending ritual, they carried up a small potbellied brown-and-white-plaster Billiken, idollic symbol of good luck of the era which, it was said, would smile if the bottoms of its feet were tickled.

So up from a sidewalk of Washington rose the National Press Club. Washington newspapermen had tried several times prior to 1908 to form a club, but each effort failed because the members blithely took credit and then just as blithely neglected to pay their bills.

These oversights require explanation: It was all due to that wisplike something in their natures which in one face made them work unconscionable hours for pittances in what amounted to a life mission and in the next face made them completely irresponsible about almost everything else.

But still they had to have a club somehow. For many of them the workday ended at 3 A.M., and there was nowhere to go but to bed or a public bar. Many were strangers to anything like family life; they had come to Washington for newspaper jobs and holed up in hall rooms. They had no money; if totally new to the business they got ten or fifteen dollars a week. The near veterans in the upper crust got about thirty dollars.

Indeed around the time the club was established over the store on F Street James M. Thomson, a red-haired better-than-average city-side reporter, sidled into the office of Bill Spurgeon, the hard, competent managing editor of the *Washington Post*, and mumbled, "Mr. Spurgeon, I make ten dollars a week, and don't you think I deserve fifteen dollars?"

This caused an emotional flexing of Mr. Spurgeon's mouth; but his eyes inclined to the ceiling and faithfully bored through that barrier upward to the Almighty for guidance. Then his eyes returned to earth, and he cried, "No, I really don't think you do." The cerebation could be called brilliant. Thomson later became publisher of the *New Orleans Item*.

But there was a necessity for a club even beyond the raising of

a place where chronically broke men might congregate and disport themselves within common limitations of poverty. They had to keep in contact with one another professionally. For them news was a perpetually threatening river to be watched around the clock. And the watchers must watch the watchers to survive. They must mingle.

There were, however, always their own natures to consider in anything having to do with business. And it was entirely fortunate that some of them understood this and produced the major miracle which sent them staggering under the heavy burdens up the narrow steps on F Street into a club that would survive.

This miracle was cemented in a piece of rough talk at the start in just five emphatic words: "*There will be no credit.*"

On that premise a few cityside reporters on a date that should have been recorded for posterity watched Graham B. Nichol of the *Washington Times* pull a stub pencil from his pocket and scratch ten dollars and his name on a piece of paper—not an I.O.U., but a check that was good at the bank. That was his sacrifice toward starting a solid club where credit would not be tolerated. The others scratched equal sums in the affirmation of pay as you join, pay as you eat, and pay as you drink.

So they had the archstone idea and garnered three hundred dollars to boot. On March 12, 1908, thirty-two newspapermen met in the Washington Chamber of Commerce, heard orations on past follies by J. Russell Young of the *Evening Star* and others, and concluded they should meet a week later. Progress followed; they decided on a name—the National Press Club—and selected the empty two-story apartments over the F Street jewelry store for a clubhouse.

Nichol, speaking through a fog of cigarette smoke and against the backfiring clatter of rattly automobiles on the early spring streets outside, believed the new club could operate on six thousand dollars a year while having an income of eight thousand dollars. If he seems overly optimistic now in the perspectives of time it should be remembered that no newspaperman ever knows how far money will go.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Oh no? See Chapter VIII. Ed.

Anyhow, on March 29, 1908, they met in the Gridiron Room of the Willard Hotel and learned that two hundred were willing to sign up. A constitution was framed. They would promote social enjoyment among the members, would cultivate literary taste, would encourage friendly intercourse among newspapermen and those with whom they are thrown in contact in the pursuit of their vocation, would aid members in distress, would foster the ethical standards of the profession.

Once situated above the jewelry store in the apartments with the white mantels with the strange naked Billikin with the inscrutable eyes seated on his plaster throne above one mantel, the club almost instantly took on an aspect it would never lose: the great came swarming in to mix, talk, and unbend with the working press.

The formal housewarming came on May 18. Against the elbows of the young men covering the police precincts and the better attired and older men covering Congress, who joined after earlier hesitation, rubbed British Ambassador, later Viscount Bryce and Buffalo Bill Cody, Sir Guy Standing and James K. Hackett, the great of the stage and the great of government. There weren't enough dishes to go around, so they served the food in relays while the dishes were washed. Ice tinkled in glasses, and passers-by in the street below heard the shafts of singing, smiled, and passed along.

The season changed, the membership grew, and the struggle for funds was unending. As the membership enlarged better service naturally was expected. In the midst of financial dilemma the club's fiscal balance of eighty dollars was inadvertently lost. But the calamity was cushioned by an addition of a kitty to the poker game. This at least paid the employees. The great phenomenon had come: the eternal poker game which continues twenty-four hours a day six days a week in its hurtle into eternity.

The game was indeed proceeding nicely on that twenty-third day of December, 1908, when somebody hollered, "Fire!" Ordinarily when the fireplaces smoked too much a member would grab a seltzer bottle and quickly quiet the blaze. But, this being near Christmas, all the seltzer on hand was needed. The place,

however, really was on fire. Bill Spurgeon, the president, agreed it was. And there was in his voice at all times that tone of authority which made men believe what he said.

So they summoned the fire department, which wrecked a beautiful fireplace and drenched the jeweler below. People who flocked to the blaze behind the horse-drawn fire wagon looked through the plate-glass windows upon Mr. G. Goldsmith standing among his cameo brooches, watch fobs, and engraved ladies' lockets an umbrella raised over his head.

But it wasn't the fire or Mr. Goldsmith that made the members move to newer, better quarters in March of 1909. The fire actually didn't even break up the poker game. The club simply had got too big for the small quarters. It got big because it fulfilled its purposes. And with the fulfillment of its purpose it became important even beyond the usefulness it had for the members. The Great of the government, of the stage, of the prize ring, the wrestling ring, of science, of education, of literature found it important because they could talk freely there with the people who wrote about them. And they could unbend completely in the company of men who were born with a built-in disregard of such matters.

Many thought at the time the little ornamental plaster Billiken with the oriental eyes brought the good luck. In any case the club rented new quarters over Affleck's Drugstore at Fifteenth and F streets, hard by the then well-heeled United States Treasury.

Just then John Hays Hammond, the financier, was looking ahead as usual. Reflecting that President William Howard Taft would be inaugurated on March 4 with the traditional panoplies of parade, he cast about for some overlooking windows to accommodate himself and friends. The rooms already rented by the club would be ideal, he considered; and, being a friend of the organization, he offered five thousand dollars for use of the window space that day. The treasury fattened instantly.

So on Saturday night, March 20, 1909—more than two weeks after the new President's formal inaugural parade—a noisy procession moved west along F Street, a block north of Pennsylvania Avenue, the thoroughfare of historic parades. Two of the national capital's tallest, finest policemen stepped at the head of the line

to the music of a Neapolitan band. Behind them came tall, slim James Preston, thirty-five years superintendent of the Senate Press Gallery, Henry Sweinhart, better known as representative of Havas News Agency, Mike Flynn, now executive editor and one of the heirs of the Washington *Times-Herald*, Earl Godwin, now a leading commentator, and some five others walking in a clump, carrying torches. And in the swaying torchlight the potbellied Billiken's slant eyes beamed down from its lofty perch on a high-lifted platform.

Behind all this strung out a frayed tatter of marchers, about one hundred newspapermen all told. Farther back weaved other newspapermen carrying the piano stool and much miscellaneous impedimenta. Some, incapable of extreme physical exertion, bore only packs of playing cards. Others lugged pictures from the walls at 1205 F Street, and some carried handfuls of poker chips.

Late office workers looked down from their windows. Motorists stopped their panting cars, unloosing upon the narrow street the choked-off fumes of gasoline. Suddenly from the frayed line somebody started singing "Around Her Neck She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" and the song in raucous jerks, discords, and yells swept along to the rear where Otto Carmichael's automobile panted forward full of club equipment that no one chose to tote. They were moving everything, including the beer steins, mugs, tables, chairs, and phonograph records. And with the movement went the convinced notion that at last they had a club rooted in solid principles of operation.

A wild cheering party broke loose in the new quarters over Mr. Affleck's head. People frequenting this hitherto serene corner of the nation's capital looked upward to the second floor where the screams of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" leaped out. And they wondered who were the men who rushed up the steep narrow steps in such haste to join the uproar.

An anonymous reporter from the *Post* rushed in, looked around, and listened. He heard Louis H. Coolidge, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury across the street, rhapsodize on his new neighbors. Congressmen Nicholas Longworth of Ohio, Gilbert M. Hitchcock (later senator) of Nebraska, and Dr. Harvey Wiley, father of the

pure-food laws, spoke in acclaim. Governor George Wilbur Peck of Wisconsin, who produced the original of *Peck's Bad Boy*, spoke eloquently.

The reporter from the *Post* rushed to his office and banged out a story under the headline "LITTLE FAT GOD MOVES." The new quarters, the story said, "admittedly take rank with any in the United States for character, individuality, camaraderie and creature comforts." It was, the story said, "a club solely and exclusively for newspapermen."

There was newspaper atmosphere. The club occupied two antebellum buildings. Its two floors on different levels were connected by three steps. Some of the walls were decorated with varnished newspaper mats from many cities. On others hung the beginnings of the country's finest display of original cartoons, including Frederic J. Haskin's collection. There were the piano and the bar, the beer steins—and the omnipresent Billiken beaming his benevolence.

And always there was the financial pinch, a distress which seemed to flow from the personal condition of most members even into their organization itself. The management reached for every available dollar. Indeed about this time Raiaf Bey, Counselor of the Turkish Embassy, called one night at the Associated Press office to inquire into reports of a political disturbance in his homeland. Upon being informed he asked of Clarence G. Marshall, the deskman that night, where a quick drink might be had. Marshall, a charter member of the club, invited him up. The Turk was charmed by the surroundings, and Marshall got him a ten-day visitor's card.

Later the management phoned Marshall. "What about Bey?" he was asked. "His card has expired, but he is still hanging around." Marshall asked if he was spending any money. "He is pouring it out," the manager said. Forthwith they elected Bey an associate member because of his intense interest in journalism.

But, within the club's reason for being, something, too, was occurring. This was nothing less than solid talk. It took place generally in the wee hours of the night when the morning-paper gang ambled in with the damp editions of the new day under

their arms. They chewed over the stories of the day before and found a better reach for the stories of the upcoming day.

And the people who made the news came more and more as time passed to the clubhouse and talked more freely than they would anywhere else. Youthful heavyweight Jim Jeffries took the floor and said he would whip the champ Jack Johnson. Dr. Cook described his Arctic adventures. Admiral Peary came and told how he really discovered the Pole. Walter Wellman told why he did not get there in his airship. Sir Ernest Shackleton told of his probings toward the other Pole. And there came Frank Gotch and Dr. Roller, the day's best wrestlers; Bat Masterson and Seth Bulard, the Wild West sheriffs, and ex-President Theodore Roosevelt.

In the gray cold of January 31, 1910, President Taft puffed up the steep steps wearing a sweater over his vest, his greatcoat left behind in the White House three blocks away. He liked the club and might be called the father of the idea for a building owned by the organization. He advanced the thought at the next New Year's Eve celebration during a quiet moment when he could get a word in.

Sarah Bernhardt chose the club as the proper place to deliver her farewell speech to America. She was, however, unable to negotiate the steep steps with her artificial leg and was carried up by Charley Keyser and Ernie Walker in the presence of the disturbed French Ambassador.

The Great Names continued coming. The annual Hobby Night brought such as Uncle Joe Cannon and Champ Clark, famous speakers of the U.S. House of Representatives; composer Victor Herbert; Willis Moore, the weather prophet, and pedagogic Woodrow Wilson, then Governor of New Jersey. Later when Wilson became President he retained his fondness for the club mostly because he could completely relax there. He told the members frankly one night just how he felt about himself. He must indeed be some kind of a fraud, he declared, if he had made people think him a cold and removed person. He liked to escape being President now and then. "If I were free I would come not infrequently to these rooms," he said.



Indeed the National Press Club by this time had really settled down to living in the second of the four homes it was to know. Now from the yellowing records and from the dimming memories of men who walked and worked and cursed and sang through those times come the images:

There were innumerable spelling bees, the toughest, perhaps, when fourteen newspapermen met fourteen statesmen with Secretary of Agriculture David H. Houston calling the words. They contested mightily, spelled their way through a conventional spelling book, and then were confronted with words taken from an obscure Holmes *Speller* which had been used thirty years before in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The statesmen won when Rep. Frank B. Willis of Ohio (afterward senator and prominent candidate for the G.O.P. Presidential nomination) spelled "hydrocephalus." The program, held in the auditorium of the Willard Hotel, was climaxed with the showing of movies of the newspapermen's children romping on the White House lawn.

There were innumerable debates. They argued before distinguished assemblages "Whether Whiskers or Baldheads Are the Greater Detriment to Mankind" and "Whether Bow Legs or Knock Knees Are the Greater Menace to Navigation." And all the while as the slow days passed through the peaceful years the piano throbbed above the druggist's head and the poker-chip piles rose and declined in the hard and at times not so quiet talk at the green-topped tables. They sang of the Old Mill Stream and except for the rumblings in the Balkans the world lay as quiet as that stream off beyond their windows.

Already the club had become an institution. It was an institution that most newspapermen of the capital felt they had to join. Some of the more aloof Capitol Hill correspondents had shied off at first. But the Big Names they daily courted, the men who gave them the news had long ago swarmed on the clubhouse at every invitation. The club could no longer be ignored by anybody in the business. And within the club's employ many magnificent characters developed.

There was Mac, the waiter. He stood six foot four in height—and never forgot a name or face. He had been Stonewall Jack-

son's boy and never abandoned the general, it was told, except at Bull Run. With Samuel J. Tilden he went around the world, and at eighty-six, with his knack for names and faces unimpaired, he was attired in a blue uniform with gold braid and posted in a chair at the door.

It became clear in 1913 that the clubhouse could accommodate only two thirds of the membership at best. And always there were the out-of-town members, the non-residents who drifted to Washington and used the facilities. So moving day came again on March 6, 1914. They moved one block up Fifteenth Street to the top floor of the Riggs Building, now called the Albee Building.

Here was more space all told; they had better cardrooms, a better taproom; and on the walls went the newspaper mats and the enlarging collection of cartoons. The potbellied Billiken they ensconced on a mantel and in the thin sunlight of early March went up to inspect the roof garden, a part of the club's appointments. Then on March 20, 1914, with the Billiken beaming approval from his slant eyes, they threw a resounding housewarming party and settled down to living again.

Into this living came Ladies' Nights. The members had discovered that their wives had to get attention or they would kick about the money that went into dues, so the women became welcome within specified hours. They had a memorable minstrel show in 1915 which featured sixty-seven actors and didn't break up until 1:45 A.M. Held in Poli's Theatre, the seats sold out two weeks in advance and sweetened the always panting treasury. Years passed.

The Great Names kept coming in, their laurels still fresh on their brows: ex-President Theodore Roosevelt; Edward, then Prince of Wales; the Lost Battalion; President Warren G. Harding; Marshal Foch; the Oberammergau Players; the irrepressible song writer Irving Berlin; that master of martial music, John Philip Sousa; the noted Broadway producer, Charles K. Harris; the Crown Prince of Sweden; the first non-stop Atlantic solo pilot, Charles A. Lindbergh—names that are remembered today and other names that seemed great at the moment, but somehow passed away.

And always they talked into ears that were bent. The club slowly was evolving from a performing role into a listening role.

But as the seat of startling incident its character could never change. The first photograph by wire was Carter Field's, flashed from cardroom to lounge. The first in radio involved an elaborate hookup with the Naval Air Station to receive a message from the *Detroit News*. President Harding, a member of the club, was present. He cocked an ear to the receiver. All that sounded were subdued clicks and buzzes until suddenly a wrathful voice poured forth in full volume into the straining ears, "The Goddamned thing won't work."

Always they had hoped to have a building of their own. Indeed in the early years above Mr. Goldsmith's jewelry store that enduring instrument of American procedure, a committee, had been named to scout the possibilities. But the best of committees can't do much on behalf of an empty pocket.

So in January, 1925, when Henry L. Sweinhart became president a first act was to appoint a special building committee. This was an act with something sounder at its core than simple hope. At the core was faith, fixed in the knowledge that the club as an institution had kept faith with its reason for being. It had become in twelve years everything it had to be to last. It was a place first where newspapermen could linger comfortably among their kind; it was an environment to which men who made news found pleasure in coming—and in talking made more news; and lastly nobody even thought of asking for credit any more. But there was even this greater thing: the club was liked by certain men who knew how on occasion to shake a few millions from the banks.<sup>2</sup>

When the present fourteen-story building finally rose above the capital's squat structures at Fourteenth and F streets in 1927 some of the original 200 members stood around and recalled how they had gone across the street to the Willard Hotel in 1908 and started the club. They talked about the days over Mr. Goldsmith's head and of the fire and the parade and of the strange

<sup>2</sup>Another chapter relates how the present National Press Building was financed and describes its appointments.

plaster Billiken with the inscrutable eyes. They wondered what had become of the thing during the moving to the new clubhouse and why anybody had brought it into the old place to begin with. For the Billiken would eternally be like themselves, a little charming if one tickled his feet enough, but forever impossible to understand.

In March, 1948, the twentieth anniversary in the new building, they looked around for the two hundred first members. The forty-five hundred or more members of the organization wanted to honor them at a Founders' Day event. Of them all only thirty-seven showed up. Some of the two hundred had gone high in the business, some had quit it altogether, and some were dead and some were sick.

The members packed the place. The thirty-seven were lined up to be greeted by the President of the United States, this time Harry S. Truman. Already in other years they had shaken the hands of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, to say nothing of the countless other celebrities who had visited the club.

The President handed to the thirty-seven engraved silver cards of life membership in the National Press Club. He said kind words, shook their hands, then ambled across the room and propped a foot on the brass rail of the bar. It was just the way the thirty-seven had meant from the beginning for any President of the United States, or any other member or guest, to act in their house.

# This Is How It Used to Be

BY BASCOM N. TIMMONS

Bascom N. Timmons began working for newspapers in his native Texas in 1906. His connections with Washington, where he now operates a bureau for twelve or more southern and southwestern newspapers, date from 1912. He is a frequent contributor to national magazines.

The two veteran Washington correspondents sat in Losekam's F Street Restaurant and talked deep into that hot July night in 1912. The heat and humidity wilted down the high starched collars of each. I hung on to their every word.

Both correspondents were eminent writing men by the standards of those days or of today. How well they or their writing were known to the general public I do not know. By-lines were the exception in the year before the century entered its teens. But to newspapermen and federal officials they were men of high honor, of clear and incisive minds who in this city of partisanship and personalities wrote with fairness and had won great respect. They were, perhaps, a little inclined to live in the past.

If, argued one, the calm Civil War major had finished out his second term as the twenty-fifth President of the United States, the theatrical Spanish-American War colonel would have been politically broken as presiding officer of the Senate just as Tom Platt and Matt Quay had planned it. Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois or Charles W. Fairbanks of Indiana would surely have been nominated and elected President in 1904 and by now be completing an orthodox eight Republican years in the White House. There having been no seven years of T. R. and four years of Taft, there

would have been no Republican-Bull Moose, Taft-Roosevelt schism and Wilson wouldn't have a look-in this year.

If, observed the other, Wilson did win, the States' rights southerners would dominate his administration and would bring a halt to centralization of government in Washington. The importance of Washington as a news center would certainly recede.

The conversation of the two veteran newsmen was interrupted from time to time. Men important in public life dined at Losekam's. Immaculate Senator Frank B. Brandagee of Connecticut answered a call on the wall telephone, stopped to say that Vice-President James S. Sherman, recently renominated at Chicago, had been stricken with a serious and probably fatal illness and would take little if any part in the campaign. It was private information, and he requested it be treated as such.

The two pillars of the correspondents' corps resumed their discussions. Even if centralization was not halted Washington could not look forward to any era as stirring as the last fifteen years.

What a panorama. Take the dramatic story of the sinking of the *Maine*. Its news coverage out of Washington had been tremendous. The New York *Sun* alone had taken one hundred and twenty-five thousand words by wire and telephone from Washington in a single day. There had been the victory of Dewey in Manila Bay and the Sunday-night news break on it from the White House. Then Dewey's triumphant return. Then there had been the shock of the assassination of the beloved McKinley.

The days and events of which they talked were far away to me. McKinley had been dead for more than a decade. That seemed a long, long time—longer than I now regard the thirty-seven years that have passed since 1912.

I paid the check. I assumed it was protocol to do so. At least neither of the great men demurred. They had eaten heartily. I considered it my good fortune to have had opportunity to listen to their words of wisdom. Established newspapermen such as these were helpful to the newcomer after he arrived, but they didn't exactly roll out any welcoming carpet. There was already a

question on ceremonial days of how to apportion the eighty-three Senate gallery seats among more than one hundred and seventy-five accredited correspondents.

The prediction that Wilson's election would result in diminishing the federal bureaucracy which that year was costing the stupendous sum of almost seven hundred million dollars per year was disconcerting to an aspiring new Washington correspondent who had dreams of making two or three newspaper connections and parlaying the income into a livelihood.

But at least I had arrived in time to see the glorious dying embers of an era. Washington newspapermen could not complain of lack of activity in 1912. They were to cover the Republican convention at Chicago and see the Bull Moose breakaway, then the bitter Woodrow Wilson-Champ Clark deadlock at the Baltimore Democratic convention and finally to stand again at Armageddon with T. R. in Chicago.

They were also to be assigned to the trains and headquarters in which an ex-President, a President, and a President-to-be fought it out; see an election which ended sixteen years of Republican rule, bringing in a Democratic President with lopsided majorities in both branches of Congress.

Some of us were in Milwaukee when John Shrank wounded Theodore Roosevelt. There was the unprecedented death of a major-party vice-presidential nominee on election eve and the substitution of Nicholas Murray Butler for the dead James S. Sherman as Taft's running mate. On Capitol Hill the Clapp Senate Investigating Committee dug into the shenanigans of Presidential campaigns past and present. J. Pierpont Morgan, silk-hatted, and the last witness I remember at a Congressional investigation with such headgear, came to face Samuel Untermyer before the Pujo "Money Trust" investigation. He was a growling, surly individual to newspapermen who tried to interview him, compared with his affable scion J. P. Morgan before the Pecora Committee and with a midget on his lap twenty years later.

To cover the great news events occurring in this dynamic news center in the antiquity of 1912 was a larger, better-paid group of writing men than were assigned to any other writing task on the

face of the earth. From the few vacancies there were in jobs they must have been turning in satisfactory performances. Most every young man who expected to make a career of journalism in those fabled days wanted to go to Washington.

Government was beginning to change rapidly in the second decade of the century. Most of the senators then sitting had been elected by legislatures, but thereafter would be chosen by direct vote. On the way was the income-tax amendment, which was fated to have a profound effect on the form of the national government and its activities. Woman suffrage and prohibition amendments were being fiercely agitated.

The last session of Congress for the Taft administration wound up snarled in a filibuster over prohibition and labor legislation. At the height of the Congressional talkathon Mr. Taft chose the National Press Club as the place to sing his felicitous swan song.

On the blustery afternoon of March 4 Governor Woodrow Wilson rode down Pennsylvania Avenue with President Taft in a horse-drawn carriage and at 1:35 took the oath as President. Then followed the longest, most colorful inaugural parade that had ever before or since gone up that historic paradeway. Nine hours after the Essex cavalry troop cantered by as the escort to President Wilson the last unit of paraders swung into the avenue from which daylight long had faded and on which blazed festoons of red, white, and blue lights. In another week Congress's wheels were grinding out the first of the far-reaching New Freedom legislative program.

The metes and bounds of Washington's news-producing area in 1912 differed little from those of 1949. In 1865 Lorenzo R. Crounse established what was to become newspaper row. In its great days in the seventies, eighties, and nineties it was a row of two-story frame and brick buildings extending from the south side of the Ebbitt Hotel, present site of the National Press Building, down Fourteenth Street to Pennsylvania Avenue. In 1907 the last incandescent light blinked out in a dingy correspondent's office along Newspaper Row. It became a street of small shops. Exactly twenty years later the majority of newspaper offices again assembled under the roof of the National Press Building.



All during this twenty-year interim, however, the offices of most Washington correspondents continued to hug Fourteenth Street. The red-brick Wyatt Building at F and Fourteenth streets (where Garfinckel's now stands) came close to being the news-writing center of the capital. The National Press Club in its early days, with all the brave way it employed the "National" in its name, was pretty much of a local newspaperman's club rather than a club for out-of-town correspondents which it eventually became. Moreover, the ground floor of the Wyatt Building also housed the Western Union offices. The majority of newsmen stayed close to the click of the Morse sender.

Other correspondents had offices in the *Washington Post*, Colorado, Hibbs, Southern, Evans, Home Life, Corcoran, District National, and 1410 Pennsylvania Avenue buildings. The new Munsey Building on E Street boasted the offices of two press associations—the United Press and the double-named Hearst National News Association and International News Service. Only the Associated Press in the Star Building on Eleventh Street was somewhat removed from the Fourteenth Street environment.

When I came to Washington there were, according to reports I heard, at least twenty correspondents making as much as one hundred dollars per week. Later I was inclined to believe the figure exaggerated. There may have been twelve, not twenty.

Most people said the late John Callan O'Laughlin of the *Chicago Tribune* was the highest-salaried Washington correspondent. He reputedly drew twelve thousand dollars per year. The *Tribune* then and for at least thirty years thereafter had the reputation of paying its bureau chief the most lavish Washington salary of any newspaper. O'Laughlin's assistant was a bright young newspaperman, Arthur Sears Henning, said to be drawing sixty-five hundred dollars per year. Later he was to be bureau chief at a salary many times larger than O'Laughlin had received.

Ranking next to O'Laughlin in emoluments was Harry L. Dunlap, successor to Samuel G. Blythe as chief of the New York *World* Bureau. Blythe, who had become author of the *Saturday Evening Post* feature "Who's Who and Why," was undoubtedly the highest-paid writing man in Washington.

Other high-ranking newspapermen who were well paid according to the standards of the day included Oscar King Davis, *New York Times*; Eltinge Fowler, *New York Morning Sun*; Robert H. Patchin, *New York Herald*; George Griswold Hill, *New York Tribune*; Sumner N. Curtis, *Chicago Record Herald*; Louis Garthe, *Baltimore American*; David S. Barry, *Providence Journal*; William E. Brigham, *Boston Evening Transcript*; and Colonel Henry Hall of the *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, and there were several more.

I had no anticipation of any quick leap (if I leaped at all) into their gaudy pay brackets, but fifty or sixty dollar a week salaries seemed common enough for me to aspire to one, and this appeared adequate for any living-scale desires I had at the time. Incidentally it was some years before I attained such a well-paid job.

But the appalling income-tax collector had not arrived on the scene. Your take-home pay was your entire salary. No deductions at all. The only thing withheld from the newspaper employee was an occasional day off and some years an entire vacation period. Guy Mason of the *New York World* and later a District of Columbia Commissioner said he worked seven years without a vacation and stopped counting the days off he lost.

A working week was a minimum of six days, and a day was from twelve to fourteen hours. There was no weekday off, unless the reporter had worked the previous Sunday or would work the following one. Mason, a good digger and writer, received forty-five dollars per week for most of the time he was with the *World*. Up to and including World War I sixty dollars was an average salary in a Washington newspaper bureau. Press associations had a lower scale.

For many years the biggest newspapers were served by only one or two correspondents at a time. Anything more than a two-man capital staff was the exception. Adolph Ochs of the *New York Times* authorized the first four-man bureau for the national capital.

It came about this way. In 1910 the enactment of the Payne-Aldrich tariff bill and the fight against "Cannonism" split the

Republican party and gave the House of Representatives to the Democrats. Champ Clark moved into the Speaker's chair in succession to Joseph Gurney Cannon. With the Democrats in House control and Theodore Roosevelt giving evidence that he wanted his third cup of coffee, Ochs felt that the stirrings along the Potomac had increased interest in Washington news. He told Oscar King Davis, his capital bureau chief, he thought the *Times* should "get up more steam" in Washington. With that end in view Ochs was willing to fire the bureau's financial boiler to the extent of an additional thirty-five dollars per week.

Davis looked around and found a likely prospect in Hal Smith of the Baltimore *Sun* staff. For the sum fixed by Mr. Ochs, Smith in 1911 joined Davis, W. Sinkler Manning, and J. A. Truesdell to make the first four-man newspaper bureau in Washington. But the *Times'* primacy was short-lived. Truesdell departed, and the *Times* was again down to three men. The New York *Morning Sun*, which was also listed as a press association in those days, for a time took ascendancy.

Any numerical comparison of the Congressional press gallery in pre-World War I with that of 1949 is misleading and reflects a larger increase than actually took place in the Washington news corps. Formerly it was the custom to list in the Congressional Directory only men who regularly covered legislative matters. Men like Bill Price of the Washington *Star*, who had reported the White House news since the Cleveland administration, were barred from Congressional Gallery listing. So were many normally assigned to executive departments, and they were forced to form their own organizations to obtain working credentials.

This uneven situation invoked many an earnest discussion in the humble homes of the unlisted. In the bosom of the family the little woman cried out against the discrimination. In the printed lists of the Congressional Directory they were stars and asterisks. The stars designated the correspondents with wives. The asterisks revealed those that had not only wives, but unmarried daughters. If by chance the White House, a cabinet officer, or an embassy wished to invite a newspaperman to a social event his marital status could be found in the Directory.

Under pressure that the Directory list all bona fide national-news-covering reporters the long-standing restrictions were removed and Congressional gallery membership became the basic accreditation in Washington. Under the rules applicable at the time of listing the Associated Press had nine men entitled to admission in 1913 and ninety in 1949. The United Press jumped from eight to fifty-eight. The International News Service listed four persons in 1912 and forty in 1949.

Formerly no Washington-published newspaper listed more than three men. In 1949 they listed not only their national-news-covering reporters, but also their society editors, news editors, managing editors, and in some cases their publishers—some of whom never go near the Capitol for news-gathering purposes. Yet, allowing for relaxed listing requirements, the increase has been large.

In 1912 the Congressional press galleries had only one hundred seventy-eight men and one woman. As the nineteen forties bowed out there were three galleries—press, radio, and periodical—with 1,014 members. Twice as many men and women were privileged to look down from the accommodation for these three agencies as there are senators and representatives on the floor, and now as always their tenure is a little more secure than that of the lawmakers.

The feminine invasion of the news corps has been an important development. The one woman member of the press gallery in 1912 was Mrs. George C. Richards. She came into the gallery in the way many women later came into Congress. When her husband died she took over the New England newspapers he had represented. Later she was joined by Mrs. Cora Rigby of the *Christian Science Monitor*. But even World War I added only two or three women to the press gallery. The years just before and during World War II saw the biggest feminine accretion, and in 1949 there were one hundred and forty-six women accredited in press, radio, and periodical galleries.

The fact that there are six hundred fewer newspapers in the United States than there were a quarter of a century ago has had some violent repercussions. Sixteen New York newspapers in the

gallery had been reduced to nine. Seven Philadelphia Bureaus came down to three. Chicago decreased from seven to five, Pittsburgh from seven to three, Brooklyn from three to none, Baltimore and St. Louis each from five to three. But the biggest reduction in Boston was not due to newspaper consolidations or suspensions. In 1912 and almost up to the time of World War I seven Boston newspapers were represented in the press gallery. In 1949 not a Boston newspaper had a full-time exclusively employed Washington correspondent, except the *Christian Science Monitor*, which is essentially a national newspaper.

Such newspapers as the New York *Morning World*, *Morning Sun*, *Press*, *Globe*, *Mail*, and *Staats-Zeitung* disappeared, the *Tribune* and the *Herald* consolidated. In Philadelphia the *North American*, *Public Ledger*, *Evening Public Ledger*, *Record*, and *Press* have gone. In Chicago the *Record Herald*, *Inter-Ocean*, and *Post* have long since ceased existence.

The 1912 gallery list reflected the meager news interest this nation had in the world or the world had in it. Only Arthur Willert of the London *Times* and Dr. George Barthelme of the Cologne *Gazette* served foreign newspapers on a full-time basis. A. Maurice Lowe represented the London *Post* on a part-time arrangement and also was correspondent for a Boston newspaper. Three British press associations—Exchange Telegraph, Reuter's Telegram Company, and Central News, Ltd., London, all were represented, but one or two of them were on a part-time basis.

Special correspondents in most cases had to dig up Sunday stories. Sometimes they experted on foreign affairs. The foreign embassies, nearly all of which were in short walking distance from the newspaper offices, furnished what would now be called "background." The most affable of all the diplomats before the nation entered World War I was Count J. H. von Bernstorff of Germany. Not only would von Bernstorff give you "background," but as the perfect host he wouldn't think of letting you leave without your taking home a bottle of wine, a box of cigars, or some German edible. The offering of presents by a news source is always embarrassing. But one just couldn't hurt the Count by

declining. Later it was very apparent there had been a reason for Bernstorff's good-fellow methods.

The Right Honorable James Bryce of Great Britain was not so accessible as Bernstorff, but sometimes you could make an engagement with him in the stately and dignified brick embassy at N and Connecticut. Bryce knew America about as well as he did Britain, but was always eager to learn more, and he had a way of interviewing the reporter instead of being interviewed. His successor, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, was not available at all. Ambassador J. J. Jusserand of France was very friendly. Dr. Constantine Theodore Dumba of Austria-Hungary, George Bakmeteff of Czarist Russia, and Chang Yin Tang of China were often absent from their posts. Viscount Sutimi Chinda of Japan was always in Washington and always ready to see newspapermen.

The Senate gallery was and probably still is the favorite gathering place of the special correspondent. Senators were the chief source of state news. They advise and consent to federal appointments within their states. A senator on a taxing or appropriation committee might give a friendly correspondent a break on an important news story long before the big bureaus or press associations had wind of it. He would let the same correspondent read his mail. The senator would go to the White House on an important state matter and reveal the result to the reporter.

We did not look on the Senate merely as another legislative body. Rather it was the symbol of the union of the forty-eight states. The conception of it in the days when most of its members had been elected by legislatures and for some years after was that aside from legislating its function was conference and negotiation between forty-eight sovereignties.

The Senate was the place of the exciting episode. Here the great floor shows were put on. Here were the Roots, Lodges, Borahs, John Sharp Williamsses, and Pat Harrisons, the viking Knute Nelson, Jim Reed, the waspish Caraway, the tart sallies of the blind Gore, and here was Tom Walsh of Montana, the keeper of the Senate's conscience. In the gallery also presided Jim Preston, who was of more assistance to the correspondent in covering Washington than the later day trinity—the handout, the black

sheet, and the ticker—with maybe even the press conference added.

Members of the House, too, furnished news. It had its colorful figures—Cannon, Clark, Cockran, Longworth, Garner, and Finis Garrett. But the House rules preclude great debate. There is never much decorum. In my memory there has been only one great speech in the House—a speech made on the floor and printed in the *Record* exactly as made. That was the speech of Bourke Cockran in opposition to the Fordney-McCumber tariff bill in 1921.

When Congress adjourned, the executive departments, ignored during the Congressional session, got a frontal attack. None of them had press sections, so the chief clerks were responsible for giving out news. It was easy enough to see a cabinet official if the importance of one's news quest warranted a personal talk. There were two hardy perennials. They were: statements by Admiral Dewey on the neglect of the Navy and by General Nelson A. Miles on the weakness of our Army.

His efforts to cover his field as thoroughly as possible were in part responsible for the burgeoning of that supposedly horrendous handmaiden of the tired Washington correspondent—the handout. It perhaps was responsible, too, for that other individual-enterprise opiate—the black sheet.

The first reference to the handout I remember was under a slightly different name—the “give-out.” It occurred in the last days of the Taft administration. I was asked to hustle to the State Department for a “give-out” on the Mexican situation by Secretary of State Philander C. Knox. President Madero had been assassinated, and war with our sister republic to the south threatened. The battleships *Vermont*, *Georgia*, and *Nebraska* were off Vera Cruz.

At the State Department Chief Clerk William McNeir handed out a typewritten statement that had been prepared by Secretary Knox, Secretary of War Stimson, and Secretary of Navy Meyer. Later Secretary Knox and Assistant Secretary of State Alvey A. Adee came out and submitted to such questions as the newspapermen wished to ask.

William P. Spurgeon, who gave me the State Department assignment, was an Englishman, and I took it for granted that the designation "give-out" was the British equivalent to our "statement" or "release." I do not remember hearing it called that again. Under the name "handout" and in mimeographed form this type of belles lettres still litters our desks and feeds our wastebaskets. But that is the subject for a chapter.

Angus McSween, correspondent for the Philadelphia *North American*, was the progenitor of "black-sheeting" as moderns know it. The cradle was the Wyatt Building. It was originally called "piece trading" and was most extensively engaged in by McSween's poker-playing cronies. To McSween any story, article, or other news effort was a "piece." With most correspondents for single newspapers expected to furnish a weekly Sunday "piece" by mail on national matters the need for copy and the exigencies of the McSween poker table fitted perfectly.

The bartered commodity might be a story of a political situation in one correspondent's section of the country which with certain additional information or adjustment could be made of interest to other sections of the nation. If the Senate balance between the parties was narrow, a doubtful Senatorial race in any state was of nationwide importance. The black sheet, née carbon copy, flourished especially in steamy, news-barren summer weather.

The piece of Washington coverage which saw the exchange of black sheets at its zenith was the League of Nations ratification fight in the Senate at the end of the Wilson administration. The result was not altogether creditable to the carbon-copy exchangers. The beneficiaries were the League opponents who planned and fed the black-sheeters a series of statements which blanketed the efforts of the treaty proponents.

Senator George H. Moses of New Hampshire plotted the strategy of stealing headlines. There was a continuous flow of material to the black-sheeters. Moses regimented the League opponents' statements and often ghosted them. Let Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock of Nebraska, leader of the ratificationists, make a day-long exposition for his cause, and Moses was ready with a statement of strategy fathered by Jim Reed, Borah, Johnson, or



Brandagee. It would be sufficiently hot to take the headlines away from Hitchcock from coast to coast.

Black-sheeting, co-operation, the pooling of efforts, fill-ins, tips and leads have been continuous around the National Press Club for years. It has been a part of the process that has added strength and force to Washington coverage.

White House coverage has undergone perhaps the greatest change of all Washington news functions. I attended only one press conference in the Taft administration. The questions were not submitted in advance as they later came to be in the terms of other Republican Presidents. It was not prolific in news, although Gus J. Karger of the Cincinnati *Times Star*—and the President's confidant—tried to make it so.

The special correspondent's method of getting White House news then was something like this: White House rules were specific. The Cabinet met on Tuesdays and Fridays from eleven o'clock in the morning until one o'clock in the afternoon. On those days no other appointments were made. Senators and representatives having constituents whom they desired to present to the President were received from 10 to 10:30 in the morning four days per week. No appointments were required for this. From ten-thirty o'clock to noon on these same days senators and representatives, regardless of their political affiliations, having business to transact were received by the President. Congressional appointments required no advance arrangements, and the White House asked that members telephone for engagements so that a time schedule for the period might be prepared and no member of Congress kept waiting for long to see the President. Important visitors having business with the President were admitted between twelve and one o'clock by appointments previously fixed.

From the standpoint of Congressional public relations it was perhaps the best arrangement any recent White House occupant has had. And from the viewpoint of the special correspondent it had its good points. He could make it a point to be at the White House during the Congressional period. If he had a question he wished to have the President answer he could have a senator or representative ask it and bring him the reply. Although it re-

quired discreet handling, it was a fine arrangement for the special correspondent. He could get an exclusive answer instead of one thrown out on the public domain for everyone's use as happened in the mob press conferences of later Presidents.

While at the White House during the Congressional period the reporter could examine the distinguished visitor's schedule. If there was a name on it that attracted him he could wait until the noon hour and interrogate the visitor as he came out from his visit with the President.

On important afternoon queries from his newspaper it was usually possible for a correspondent to have Charles D. Hilles, the President's secretary, obtain the information sought.

A tiny pressroom on the east side of the Executive Office entrance was barely large enough for the use of the *Washington Star's* huge Bill Price, its continuous occupant, with enough left to provide chess-game room for Matt Tighe of Hearst's *New York Journal* and a White House aide. Press quarters were moved across the corridor and enlarged after the Executive Office fire in the Hoover administration. They were enlarged again in the Roosevelt administration and equipped for conditions brought about by White House ascendancy as a news center.

The White House news-conference machinery as it exists today is essentially as it was established by Woodrow Wilson. The modifications made by Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover were all thrown out by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who re-instated the Wilson system. It was continued by President Truman.

Wilson's conception of his press conferences was that he would answer questions much as interrogations are answered in the British House of Commons. His ideal was to make it the highest interpellative device.

To the first mass press conference ever held by a President of the United States—open to all accredited members of the press gallery—trooped enough newspapermen to pack the President's office to the doors. His audience cheered lustily when Mr. Wilson told of his hope for close and cordial relations with the press and promised "full and free discussion of all large questions of the moment."

President Wilson fulfilled his part of the bargain. Obviously he found the questions of the older and mature members of the corps stimulating and answered them with zest. Fearful that he might be accused of using the conferences as a sounding board, he volunteered little information other than that called for in reply to questions.

The Wilson conferences were the most dignified of all. He treated newspapermen with respect and deference. Personal and trivial questions irked him, especially the frequent queries about wedding rumors on his daughters Margaret, Eleanor, and Jessie. The conferences became sporadic as time went on. There were few White House conferences after the sinking of the *Lusitania*; none during the progress of World War I.

His last press conference when he returned from the peace conference at Versailles was perhaps the most dramatic of all White House meetings between Presidents and the press.

Warren G. Harding was himself a newspaperman and prided himself on the fact. His conferences started auspiciously and eventually bogged down. For eight or nine months they were very fruitful to newspapermen. Harding alternated the time of his conferences, one morning and one afternoon so as to give everyone an even break. The thing most newspapermen who attended these White House press conferences in the days of "normalcy" remember was Harding's irritability at the morning conferences and his affability at the afternoon ones.

Mr. Harding had his mind on local angles and was a good news source for the special correspondent. Often at the end of a press session he would catch sight of a newsman he knew, beckon him to tell him he had better be on the lookout for the imminent appointment of a federal judge or some other matter of state interest.

Sometimes Harding would say to his newspaper visitor, "Now I've told you something, tell me something. Is there any scandal around town?"

Unfortunately it turned out there was a lot of it.

Harding, handsomest of Presidents, would arise with great pomposity at the beginning of his conferences as if intent on mak-

ing a world-shaking announcement. Only once did he live up to that promise. On that occasion his famous wrong answer as to whether the Four-Power Pacific Pact guaranteed the protection of the main Japanese Islands brought an end to the give and take of questions and answers between President and press corps.

Mr. Harding's answer, had it stood, would have meant that the United States, Great Britain, and France guaranteed the perpetuation of the Japanese Empire. After the State Department straightened that boner out Harding announced a policy of answering only questions submitted to him in writing before the beginning of a press conference. Oral questions could be asked, however, in amplification or development of submitted ones.

I can only give my own impressions and views of the White House press conferences. Every one of the seven Presidents in my time has had some bright, newsy press conferences. But for the most part such conferences have been rather dreary, desultory affairs. I would say that from a news standpoint the most valuable were the first three years of Franklin D. Roosevelt's first term, the first two years of Woodrow Wilson's, and the first eight or nine months of Warren G. Harding's.

Roosevelt and Coolidge employed them to the best advantage to themselves—and both were accused of using the press, Roosevelt among other things to make himself appear almost as a personal Santa Claus to great elements of the voters; Coolidge of disseminating popularity-making trivia. Whatever the merits of the charges, their technique was different. Roosevelt at the outset openly courted the newspapermen. Coolidge always gave the appearance of being as reserved and as little disposed to ingratiate himself with the press as Wilson had been. Coolidge of all the Presidents finished his term with his press relations better at the end than at the beginning.

Hoover had a bad press from the first. The New Deal of Roosevelt like the New Freedom of Wilson was blacked out by war. In the end the Roosevelt press conferences were as unsatisfactory as those of Wilson.

Most press conferences are for the majority of newspapermen a waste of time. Unless it is his specific assignment or he has a

question he wants to ask and have answered it is not worth the time consumed getting to the White House nor the discomfort he goes through after he gets there. If the attendance was on the basis of expected specific information perhaps not over seventy-five men and women would go to each conference. Many of them go purely for rotary, sight-seeing, or gregarious reasons.

It seems to me there should be a better way than for men and women to crowd into the President's office in a mob scene and start firing questions at the nation's chief executive. Both Roosevelt and Truman answered questions they did not understand in the confused situation in which they were asked. Perhaps even the ill-fated Harding did not exactly catch the question on which he made his historical boner.

There have been in the memory of many still active Washington correspondents four peak and two near-peak news-producing periods. They were: (1) the beginning of the Wilson administration and the New Freedom legislative program; (2) World War I and the year following; (3) the beginning of the Roosevelt administration and the New Deal; (4) World War II and the year following.

The lesser periods were the Harding administration at the outset and the depression which came in the Hoover administration. The Washington news corps met the challenge in each case. Of all the tests perhaps the hardest was World War I. World War II was a vaster and more devastating one many times over, lasted longer, and had a greater expenditure in life and treasure, but in a sense it was a repeat performance. No radio was present to give information in World War I. The newspapers alone carried it. Men and women waited outside newspaper offices for news. This was especially true when the casualty lists began to come in. Newspapers made all the regular editions, and extras whirled from the presses. There were around two hundred and twenty-five correspondents when this nation first went to war with the Imperial German Government. The departments did not have publicity men to assist us. At the White House there was no helpful Steve Early. Joseph P. Tumulty was the lone White House Secretary. He was as obliging as he could be, but he had his hands

full in other directions. The Creel Committee on Public Information was set up, but it took time to get going.

For my money the month of April, 1917, was the all-time big news month in Washington. It began on tense April 2. The day that was to see Woodrow Wilson ask for a declaration of war began with a fist fight. The winner of the fisticuffs was slight seventy-year-old Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and it marked positively the first time in his life that the Boston Brahman had engaged in the manly art of self-defense. He was defending himself against an annoying pacifist in a Senate corridor. The pacifist went down for the count. Lodge, proud of the efficacy of his hitherto unsuspected muscles, went to the Senate chamber to receive congratulations. The pacifists besieged Vice-President Marshall's office and were thrown out. They filled Speaker Clark's office. Hundreds streamed through the corridors of Senate and House office buildings seeking to talk to senators and representatives.

At nightfall the pacifists had been cleared off the Capitol grounds. Troops of the Second Cavalry guarded every approach. Secret Service, policemen, and armed Post-Office Inspectors guarded the inside of the Capitol building. Wilson came to the Capitol guarded by another cavalry detachment.

Vice-President Marshall led ninety senators into the House chamber, nearly every senator wearing or carrying a small American flag. Chief Justice White and members of the Supreme Court and the envoys of foreign nations sat in a group on the House floor. Galleries were packed. The President got a five-minute ovation before he could start his speech.

The big hands of Chief Justice White started most of the rounds of applause which punctuated the speech. The President never even paused at the end of his punch line: "The world must be made safe for democracy." Only Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi seemed to realize its import, and he began the long-delayed applause.

At 3:12 A.M. on April 6 the House voted three hundred and seventy-three to fifty for the resolution Wilson had asked. One

of the fifty was Representative Claude Kitchin of North Carolina, Wilson's Democratic floor leader.

Another was Miss Jeannette Rankin of Montana, first woman member of Congress, who voted against the declaration with the tearful statement, "I want to stand by my country, but I cannot vote for war."

The Senate voted war with only six negative votes: Lane of Oregon, Stone of Missouri, and Vardaman of Mississippi, Democrats; Gronna of North Dakota, LaFollette of Wisconsin, and Norris of Nebraska, Republicans.

Feeling ran high against the opposing senators. Physical violence was threatened against them. Norris, Stone, and LaFollette were hanged in effigy. News was breaking at the White House, on Capitol Hill, and at the State, War, Navy, Justice, and Labor departments. While Congress passed war measure after war measure, executive departments issued regulations. Big war agencies came into being. Herbert Hoover was appointed to head the War Food Board. There were measures to raise and equip an Army by tremendous bond issues in a country which had only a half billion debt and knew nothing about government-bond selling.

Dramatic incidents piled one upon the other. William Jennings Bryan, who had broken with Wilson over war measures, offered to enlist as a private. Theodore Roosevelt, who wanted to be a general, offered to raise a division of volunteers. In the House Wilson suffered the defection of the most highly placed Democratic member when Speaker Champ Clark left the dais to oppose the conscription of soldiers.

In the midst of talk about a coalition government Colonel Roosevelt came back to the White House he had occupied for seven turbulent years and spent forty-five minutes with Woodrow Wilson, the man he had so bitterly reviled. His visit was supposed to have been a secret, but when the doughty Colonel drove up on the morning of April 10 accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. Nicholas Longworth, fifty newspapermen had learned the secret and were waiting. Half of them Roosevelt knew and warmly greeted. He issued a brief statement as he left.

That afternoon at the Longworth home Roosevelt held court like an emperor. Secretary of War Baker called on him; so also did the military committee of both House and Senate. From the embassies came Spring-Rice of Great Britain, J. Jules Jusserand of France, and Arne Sata of Japan. But the Colonel did not take his division. Instead, John J. Pershing was to go over with an expeditionary force, and two million Americans crossed on the bridge of ships to fight in the trenches of France.

But up to near the end of April the word had been that we would send no expeditionary force, that we would merely furnish the tools and our Allies would do the job. Bomb explosions and sabotage shook the country. In the first encounter of the war the American ship *Mongolia* sank a submarine.

On April 22 the aristocratic Arthur J. Balfour landed from a ship which had zigzagged through the submarine zone. His safe landing was announced Saturday. Early Sunday crowds began to gather around the Union Station. By midafternoon when he arrived tens of thousands of people were lining Union Station Plaza and stretched up Massachusetts Avenue.

Balfour, whose career extended back to the days of Disraeli, had occupied all the great positions in his native land. His first press conference was one of the great occasions of the war. Seventy-five newspapermen went through a line of woman-suffrage pickets and crowded into the huge reception room of the McVeagh mansion (later the Mexican Embassy). Very tall, with silvery gray hair and drooping mustache, Balfour was charming and courteous. He was the only man I have ever seen who I thought could state a case better than Winston Churchill. We were pretty sure as we left the press conference after he had given us a verbal photograph that the United States would send men to Europe.

On April 25, René Viviani, Vice-Premier of France, and Marshal Joffre came, arriving aboard the Presidential yacht *Mayflower* at the Navy Yard. Joffre was still the great hero of the war and had been since his taxicab army stopped the German advance at the Marne. Two hundred thousand men and women waited along Pennsylvania Avenue. Big sturdy Joffre, wearing his red



hat and a great military coat of grenadier blue, got a hero's greeting as he stood like a statue on the deck of the *Mayflower*.

Viviani received the press first in the library of the Henry White mansion. He spoke no English, but in eloquent French he told of France's plight. Then came the press interview with Joffre. The big heavy-mustached marshal of France whispered to an aide. The aide spoke.

"Marshall Joffre," he told us, "wishes to shake hands with all those who have done him the honor to come here."

One by one we marched by, and Joffre let no one go his way until he understood each man's name and called him by that name.

Then Joffre told us, "France is bled white." We left the drawing room of the White mansion convinced we had rather fight than write that war. One by one we went into uniforms from private to colonel. To many of us what happened in Washington coverage was mere hearsay.

Then there were the peace celebrations, the phony one on the false report and the good one on the authentic armistice of November 11, 1918, and we returned to war's aftermath, to normalcy, the wonderful twenties, the depression, and another world war.

There have been many changes in Washington coverage in my time here as there have been in all phases of newspaper making. Salaries and working conditions have improved greatly. Two world wars and the threat of another have put a more international tinge on its news report. The advent of the income-tax constitutional amendment making it possible for the central government to collect and spend or redistribute the income of the nation has wrought far-reaching domestic changes. But the Washington newspaper corps had forty years ago and still has these component parts:

- (1) The big newspaper which makes a primary news report out of Washington. There are not more than a half-dozen of these even now.

- (2) The newspaper with a single correspondent or a two-or-three-man bureau. The correspondent in the one-or-two-man bureau continues to be what he always was, both a political reporter

and a specialist in the type of economic coverage of most vital interest to the area of his newspaper's circulation.

(3) The press association. More than half of the newspaper-reading public of the United States is served by newspapers not represented by special Washington correspondents, getting only the output of the press associations from the national capital.

Washington news coverage has never been haphazard. It has always had an intelligent body of newspaper writers. The history of this nation has been one of crisis, catastrophe, and change. Selected men were sent to the seat of the nation's government to record, chronicle, and interpret these events. These newspaper writers have kept pace with the times, making whatever adjustments necessary and living up to the traditions of the Washington correspondent.

The formula for success for a Washington correspondent is about as it has always been. He must be a man of alert mind. He must have courage, fairness, dignity, self-reliance, industry, integrity, and intelligence. When he writes he must have the authority of accurate information. Good legs and large acquaintanceship are helpful.

Washington has never been a city of brilliant newspaper bohemians. It has had its great raconteurs like William Green Sterrett, Alfred Henry Lewis, Perry Heath, and Samuel G. Blythe. All of them were serious men when it came to the business of reporting the news. Reliability and accuracy have always been stressed here. Newspapermen have taken the nation's institutions and their responsibility to the reading public seriously.

No Washington correspondent in his news-writing capacity has ever written his name in slashing letters across the sky. Most of them have been contemptuous of fame, aspiring to be only competent workmen. Generally where they have won national fame it has been within their own profession and not with the newspaper-reading public. They work largely in anonymity.

The by-line came into general use only in the last quarter of a century, making many of them well known in the area of their newspaper's primary circulation. The primary circulation of all newspapers in the United States is regionalized. We have no

national newspaper. The standard-sized newspaper in the nation with the largest circulation has less than a million out of a total daily newspaper circulation of fifty-six million.

I have worked along with perhaps three thousand newspapermen in Washington. There has been great inequality of talent between them, of course. But most of them who stayed long were men of fine ability. I have bright memories of assignments covered with many of them.

To mention a few of them: Dick Oulahan was the Beau Sabreur of them all. Theodore Tiller was without a peer in writing the light story. I have admired the pictorial vividness of a fast-written story by George R. Holmes and the steady, effective-production working habits of Arthur Krock. They are types. The stature of some of those who have passed along increases in retrospect. Admiration for those still here increases with better acquaintance.

Through the teens, twenties, thirties, forties, at the threshold of the fifties of this century there have been few pauses for the Washington correspondent. There was one which lasted rather interruptedly through the four-year-long Indian summer of Coolidge's elective term. That was when the country thought it was doing all right for itself and wanted nothing out of Washington except new Coolidge anecdotes.

Whether the next generation of Washington correspondents will see two world wars and an eleven-year depression such as marked the last three years of Herbert Hoover's and the first two terms of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration is to be doubted.

But the young men who come along to the press gallery will be able to keep themselves passably well occupied with new and interesting things. They will always be appalled at the number of scrubs playing on the government's first team. They will meet some nice people, some able public servants, and some humbugs, and perhaps the humbugs will be more charming than the able men. Undoubtedly like my able newspaper companions on my first night in Washington they will be sure that the period they are covering is the most interesting in American history.

## The Placid Twenties

BY FLETCHER KNEBEL

Fletcher Knebel, born in Dayton, Ohio, has been a correspondent of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* in Washington since 1937. He was a lieutenant in U.S. Naval antisubmarine aircraft service during World War II. He has contributed to *Reader's Digest*, *Esquire*, and *Pic* magazines.

A smile creased the handsome face, radiating camaraderie and warmth.

The speaker in black tie and boiled shirt had just come from a reception. Puddler Jim Davis, the Secretary of Labor, had assured him in advance no speech was required, but, once there, they'd called on him, and, well, he couldn't refuse. Now here he was again on his feet. It reminded him of his father's warning:

"'Warren,' he used to tell me, 'it's a good thing you weren't born a girl. With your inability to say no you'd be in a family way all the time.'"

Laughter crackled from the crowd of newspapermen gathered in the dining room of the cozy National Press Club, then tucked away on the top floor of the Albee Building, just a block from the White House.

Warren Gamaliel Harding, first and only newspaperman President of the United States, was out with the boys. The date was March 4, 1922, and he had just cut a cake commemorating the first anniversary of his inauguration.

Thus opened Washington's shimmering twenties, an era of alternating peace and scandal between the close of World War I and the close of the stock market in the '29 crash.

Few who heard Warren Harding's apt appraisal of himself

that night glimpsed its portent: Jesse Smith's suicide and Edward L. Doheny's little black bag, graft in Teapot Dome and boodle in the Veterans' Bureau, quick cash and fast living in the "little green house" on K Street, missing records at a bank in Washington Court House, Ohio, and a maze of Senate investigations and court trials.

Yet few who heard the remark ever forgot it. Newspapermen possess an enormous capacity for self-flagellation, and the older correspondents today quote the Harding story word for word, wryly acknowledging a great story missed until a Senate committee spread it on the public record.

The twenties . . .

Those sweet, daffy days beyond recall, when a Washington reporter covered politics and/or crime without tortures of doubt as to his knowledge of nuclear physics, the situation in Iran, or the thought processes of the President's Council of Economic Advisers . . .

That blissful epoch before Newspaper Guild cards and Social Security numbers when the only economic disputes among Washington newsmen concerned a five-cent cup of coffee and a nickel slice of pie at the Press Club . . .

That decade of plentiful newsprint, when a correspondent could write his heart out, five columns a night, over the rivulet of black gold from Elk Hills to Albert B. Fall's New Mexico ranch . . .

When the succulent investigations of the Ohio plunder boys were interspersed with lengthy periods of journalistic torpor, enlivened only by Calvin Coolidge's comments on the chrysanthemum show and Andy Mellon's decisions to cut taxes again.

There were, of course, great Washington stories in the happy interregnum between war and depression.

The burial of the Unknown Soldier, the disarmament conference, the Harding scandals, the Lindbergh visit, the historic funeral of secret Senate sessions, and the continuing maneuvers of the Republican insurgents all provided the training ground for a host of able young reporters whose names later became passports to fame.

Yet between these Washington outbursts on page one the corps of correspondents delighted in prolonged snoozes, long since driven into the legendary past by successive hammer strokes of depression, Roosevelt, the New Deal, World War II, the cold war, and the Fair Deal of Battery D's intrepid captain.

There were periods, particularly during the second Coolidge administration, when Washington newspaper bureaus went for days on end without squeezing their stories forward of the pages inhabited by the truss ads and liver-pill lures.

Managing editors, not yet accustomed to sending embryo economics professors and journalistic Buck Rogerses to cover Washington, feasted greedy eyes elsewhere to enlighten readers of the dizzy decade.

They preferred Peaches Browning and her "daddy," the York real-estate man; the Hall-Mills murder case and the Woman; Charles A. Lindbergh's solo flight to glory across Atlantic; Babe Ruth and his mighty baseball club; grease-smeared Trudy Ederle breasting the icy English Channel; Gangster Al Capone and the spatter of hoodlum blood crimsoning a Chicago St. Valentine's Day; and above all that glorious, ever rocketing stock market with its promise of every charwoman a Cinderella.

Even most of the vivid political spectacles occurred outside Washington. The capital correspondents trekked to San Francisco for the exciting forty-four-ballot nomination of James M. Cox by the Democrats, to Chicago for fulfillment of U.S. Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty's "smoke-filled room" promise of Warren Harding's selection by the G.O.P., and to Madison Square Garden in 1924 for four weeks of delirious Democratic mayhem which ended in limp anticlimax on the one hundred and third ballot with the nomination of that nice colorless lawyer, John W. Davis.

The Scopes monkey trial, covered by so many Washington reporters, took place in sweaty Dayton, Tenn., while the most famous of political statements in the twenties—Coolidge's "I do not choose to run for President in 1928"—was handed to correspondents at Rapid City in the faraway Black Hills of South Dakota.

Washington luckily did have its hot flashes which dampened the

sweatband of many a young reporter's fretful crown. The decade, for instance, produced such newsmen as Paul Y. Anderson, the brilliant, erratic St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* correspondent who won a Pulitzer Prize, then took his own life in an emotional whirlpool a decade later.

It made Thomas L. Stokes, the columnist and Pulitzer Prize winner who tilts hopefully on the side of the little guy, then a United Press reporter covering the White House; Charles G. Ross, then chief of the *Post-Dispatch* bureau, now the sad-eyed and gentle press apostle of President Truman; Stephen T. Early, then of the Associated Press, later the shrewd press adviser to Franklin D. Roosevelt and still later Undersecretary of Defense under Secretary Louis Johnson; David Lawrence, the columnar pundit and successful publisher; Charles Michelson, then head of the New York *World* bureau, later the Democratic publicity ghost who haunted Herbert Hoover; Roy A. Roberts of the Kansas City *Star*, now boss of that lucrative employee-owned property and a weighty factor in high Republican counsels; Mark Sullivan, reporter turned columnist, historian, and athlete in the Hoover "medicine-ball Cabinet"; and the late Raymond Clapper, prince of temperate commentary.

Despite holdovers from its war boom, Washington retained much of its old small-town atmosphere. The city's population increased gradually from 437,000 persons in 1920 to 486,000 by the end of the decade. The press corps, still small enough for a newspaperman to know every other reporter in town, numbered two hundred and fifteen correspondents for daily newspapers in 1920 and grew to three hundred and forty-seven reporters by 1929.

Monarch of the corps throughout the decade was the late Richard V. Oulahan, elegant, cane-carrying chief of the New York *Times* bureau. There were better reporters and better writers in town, but few could match his daily average of sound, penetrating dispatches.

Washington correspondents of the twenties were primarily political reporters in the Oulahan fashion. The concept of the District of Columbia as the economic capital of the world was yet unborn. Harding and Coolidge permitted the reins of financial power to

remain in Wall Street, and the average political writer thought government pump priming referred to a later afternoon slug of the real stuff in House Speaker Nicholas Longworth's office.

The formal press conference had become standard practice at the White House, but this journalistic mass-production technique had yet to intrigue whole battalions of cabinet officers, agency heads, and lobbyists.

Reporters still walked Washington's magnificent distances. Salaries were low. Newspaper bureau chiefs averaged seven thousand dollars a year in contrast to today's fifteen thousand dollars and up. Expense accounts were scrawny. In addition scores of reporters for strings of small-city dailies made their living by pumping local items into the hinterland. This required a sizeable amount of reportorial ability and an enormous expenditure of leg power.

Epitome of the "item grabber" was the beloved Louis Ludlow, who pounded Pennsylvania Avenue and the corridors of Capitol Hill like a man possessed. His head bulged with so many local paragraphs that his friends feared it would some day fly apart. Indeed it practically did, for he ran for Congress as a Democrat from Indianapolis and eventually served a lengthy sentence in that institution.

The scope of his task can be imagined when it is realized that in 1924 he covered the capital for the *Columbus Dispatch*, *Ohio State Journal*, *Denver Post*, *Louisville Evening Post*, *Savannah Press* and *Ft. Wayne News-Sentinel*, no less. According to the Apocrypha of the day, Ludlow once rushed out to cover a local traffic accident because it occurred on Indiana Avenue.

Once elected a vice-president of the Press Club to enhance his chances of a nervous breakdown, Ludlow rewarded his constituents by making a two-hour speech. He became president a few weeks later, replacing Alfred H. Kirchhofer, correspondent of the *Buffalo Evening News*, who returned to Buffalo as managing editor.

The government-information man, the bureau press-agent, and the mimeographed handout now spangling Washington from Foggy Bottom to the Pentagon, were then in their infancy. Bold



beginnings, it is true, were made in the Commerce Department, where disciples of Herbert Hoover sought to proselytize the nation.

Relations between press and White House jogged along on a consistently pleasant platitudinous plateau during the twenties, but none could claim an overabundance of news from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Washington reporters covering Harding's 1920 "front porch" campaign in Marion, Ohio, found him exceedingly co-operative. Daily he visited the press shack erected in a neighboring back yard. Lighting a cigarette, he opened the question period with an affable, "Shoot!"

After election he established twice-a-week press conferences on a permanent basis, permitting a free volley of questions, limited only by the sensible rule that he not be quoted directly.

This type of conference, forerunner of the volcanic press sessions of Franklin D. Roosevelt, might have gone on indefinitely had not Harding given the wrong off-the-cuff answer at the time of the World Disarmament Conference.

A reporter asked whether the Four Power Treaty on Pacific Islands applied to Japan. Harding said yes. The correct answer, it quickly appeared, was 180 degrees away.

When the news exploded on startled diplomats Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes, his famous chin whiskers bristling to port and starboard, bore down on the White House from the State Department gingerbread pile across the street. Harding, defying all Presidential precedent, admitted his error, and the negotiators added a paragraph in the treaty just to make sure.

As a result, however, the White House required correspondents henceforth to submit questions in writing. Harding continued to answer most questions frankly, ducking only those of obviously delicate nature. All in all, despite his henchmen's efforts to lug off everything but the capitol dome, Harding elevated the Presidential press conference to a new level of informative discussion, a distinct gain for the public.

The same could not be said for Calvin Coolidge, the frozen myth from Vermont. Coolidge started off well enough by extend-

ing the press conferences with approximately the same rules existing when Harding died. He saw the newspapermen twice a week, once for afternoon papers and once for the AM's.

There was a major difference. Coolidge seldom said anything. The former Massachusetts governor, riding the crest of a prosperity wave, felt the less said by him the better. He harbored the definite theory that government should be returned to the hearthstone. Thus he was content to let the ship of state drift in the horse latitudes without daily bulletins on the condition of crew and cargo.

As he busied himself keeping cool with Coolidge the President habitually riffled through the stack of written questions at press conferences, turning aside inquiries on federal policy and personnel. Finally his eyes would light on a non-political topic far removed from what might be termed current events. He would then deliver what amounted to a discourse.

One day he flipped past fifty or more questions to concentrate on the subject of the chrysanthemum show then being held in the city. He discussed the flower from stem to pistil and took his stand irrevocably on the side of the bloom. Another time he came out in favor of fishing in the Tidal Basin and once replied to a query about a debunking biography of George Washington by turning toward the window. "The monument's still standing, isn't it?" he asked.

If the White House news spring ran dry during the twenties, the rest of "downtown" Washington, or the executive departments, provided little more than a trickle. In the long Congressional vacations when government officials fled soggy Washington for mountain and beach news-thirsty reporters sought out such forgotten pools as the Bureau of Standards, Patent Office, and even the Smithsonian Institution.

The one valuable source of news downtown throughout this period was Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, then free of the layer of frost in which the depression later encased him. Hoover chatted freely with reporters, laughed easily, and tried to provide helpful hints on stories.

The best Washington news, however, bubbled from the foun-

tain of the U.S. Senate. "We never covered Washington in the twenties," recalls Raymond P. Brandt, now chief correspondent of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. "We covered the Senate. You wasted your time downtown."

The Republican insurgents, or the men dubbed the "sons of the wild jackass" by Senator George H. Moses of New Hampshire, carried on a running fight with the G.O.P. organization, ambushing the status quo, sniping at the gods of capitalism, and generally providing the nation a preview of the vast economic battles of the thirties.

From the Senate sprang the investigations of the Harding cesspool by Montana senators Thomas J. Walsh and Burton K. Wheeler. In the Senate rebellious farmers first sowed the seeds of discontent. It was the Senate which made the political news. The Old Guard Senate cabal nominated Harding. The Senate irreconcilables wrecked the League of Nations. The Senate jousted with Coolidge nominations for high office, and the Senate's secret sessions provoked one of the great battles between the press and the legislative branch of the government.

Such men as George W. Norris of Nebraska, William E. Borah of Idaho, Bob LaFollette (the elder) of Wisconsin, James Couzens of Michigan, and Hiram W. Johnson of California played the press's game. They whispered to reporters. They tipped a story here, another there.

Many of them talked freely to Paul Mallon, then of the United Press, the day he set out to compile a complete Senate roll call on the secret vote to confirm Roy O. West as Secretary of the Interior in 1928. Publication of the roll call, bannered by many newspapers, brought roars of rage from Senate conservatives. Senator David A. Reed, a Pennsylvania Republican power, investigated the case, denounced the press, and threatened to banish Mallon from the gallery.

On the next secret vote newsmen retaliated by pooling their efforts to get the complete man-by-man tabulation again. In the end the press triumphed, and secret sessions of the Senate, customary on treaties and nominations since the days of George Washington, passed from the American scene.

Senate investigations saw a high degree of co-operation between lawmakers and reporters, who spent their nights dreaming up new questions on which to impale reluctant witnesses. Wheeler never forgot a correspondent's question. When a note was passed to him during a hearing he shoved it casually under a stack of papers, but usually retrieved it at the most embarrassing moment for the gentleman before him.

With Washington dominating the front pages only sporadically, it was but natural that Pulitzer Prizes did not shower on capital correspondents during the twenties. In ten years only three found their way to Washington newsmen. The judges crowned Louis Seibold, yesteryear's ace of the *New York World*, for his exclusive interview with President Wilson in June, 1920, after the G. O. P. nomination of Harding. The fact that Wilson invited Seibold to the White House dimmed the luster of this feat somewhat, although it could be argued that a newsman had to possess superior talents to merit the invitation in the first place.

Another Pulitzer Prize came to Washington for A.P. newsman Kirke L. Simpson's moving story of the ceremonies surrounding the burial of the Unknown Soldier. Hundreds of reporters, Tom Stokes recalls, tried to write literature that day. Simpson succeeded. Those who run across Simpson's story in yellowing journalism textbooks should remember that it was written with the dead line demons of a thousand newspapers yowling at his elbow. The poet's freedom to recollect emotion in tranquility was not for Kirke.

Then near the close of the decade the Pulitzer judges honored Paul Anderson for pestering senators until they launched a second investigation of the \$2,770,000 in missing Liberty bonds which the Continental Trading Co., Ltd. had set aside for Teapot Dome transactions.

History will never reclaim the full story of those Harding scandals, but bits and pieces keep turning up as time goes by. When former Attorney General Daugherty declined to reveal the reason for destroyed bank records at Washington Court House, Ohio, he tossed a sensation into the trial by intimating that his confidential connections with the dead Harding forced him to seal his lips. His

attorney, going even further, declared that Daugherty would be commended, rather than condemned if "the real reason for destroying the ledger sheets" were known.

Roy Roberts, then Washington correspondent of the *Kansas City Star*, hurried to his friend Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas. Did he know off the record the reason for the mysterious bank account? For once an answer left the irrepressible Roberts bug-eyed.

"By God, Roy," moaned Curtis, shuddering over the Grand Old Party's grand old predicament, "it has something to do with an illegitimate baby."

Throughout this juicy period the National Press Club remained the second home of the newspapermen who alternately yawned with boredom and scampered like cubs on the police beat after new details of the fallen mighty.

Prohibition had turned America into a land of hypocrisy. The Press Club, strangely enough, reacted with relative forthrightness. The famous club bar closed at the law's appointed hour after a mammoth wake and never reopened until Repeal.

A number of reporters cached bottles in club lockers, but the club never became the scene of the bathtub-gin orgies which ran up the furniture-repair bills of other similar institutions. As a matter of fact, while newspapermen drink with the rest of wayward mankind, the only writers who satisfy the typical Hollywood portrait are those on the way to becoming former newspapermen. By and large during the period Washington correspondents confined their drinking to purlieus removed from the Press Club.

The wet and dry issue, of course, figured in the annual Press Club elections when newspapermen strove to emulate the bold machine operations of the Vares, Penroses, and Pendergasts. The elections occasionally turned on the Gridiron Club issue. The Gridiron Club, which limits membership to fifty Washington newspapermen and which lampoons the politicians at semiannual dinners, had been accused of seeking to control Press Club elections. While Gridiron members swore that Press Club politics had never been mentioned inside the sanctum, the rest of the press corps remained politely cynical. Several Gridiron members tum-

bled to defeat when seeking Press Club office during the twenties because of their affiliation.

Until the club moved to its present quarters in late 1927 it occupied a suite of informal rooms on the eighth floor of the Albee Building at 15th and G streets across from the Treasury. The lower floors were devoted to the Keith Theatre.

Woodrow Wilson, a lover of vaudeville, often attended the Keith shows even after he left the White House. He became a familiar figure to Press Club members entering the building of an evening. His car would pull up to the curb, where friends would help the frail, broken man of Versailles to the side entrance on G Street beyond the prying eyes of curious crowds.

On scores of nights famous vaudeville teams of the era played a midnight tour at the Press Club, while visiting Broadway stars frequently dropped in for a few hours of fun and frolic.

Press Club memories dwell on the night that Victor Herbert played his own magic melodies on a borrowed cello. It was shortly before the master's death in 1924. A troupe of musicians and theatrical people had come to Washington under the wing of Gene Buck in the formative days of ASCAP (American Society of Composers and Publishers) to testify on radio problems before a Congressional committee.

Invited to the Press Club, the artists spun into an evening of song and patter. Herbert, who loved such informal nights, wanted to play, but lacked the wherewithal. A correspondent suddenly appeared with a cello.

Herbert grimaced as he tentatively drew a bow across the strings.

"Where'd you get this?" he asked.

"From the orchestra down at Keith's."

"Why, whoever plays this ought to be ashamed of himself," said Herbert.

Unashamed to use the instrument himself, the beloved composer brought forth song after song that he had written into the hearts of his countrymen.

The two U.S. Presidents of the decade frequently visited the club in response to invitations. Once Coolidge attended a cere-

mony in connection with the presentation of a Harding picture to the club. George F. Authier, correspondent of the *Minneapolis Tribune* and by avocation a Press Club boss, acted as master of ceremonies. Said ceremonies grew a bit monotonous. Authier leaned over to whisper to the honored guest.

"Say," he said, "this thing is dragging. Don't you think we ought to pep it up a bit?"

"Suits me," quoth Coolidge, dropping his pearl of wisdom for the evening.

Harding holds the somewhat dubious title of being the only President of the United States to enter the Press Club unexpected and unheralded.

A group of correspondents who covered the front-porch campaign organized a loose outfit know as the "Order of the Elephant, Local 1, Marion, Ohio." During the Disarmament Conference they held a reunion at the Press Club, dedicating the evening to a game of hearts at a nickel a point, game and stakes enshrined during the 1920 summer evenings in Marion.

Among them were Ray Clapper; George R. Holmes of the International News Service; Samuel W. Bell, then of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*; Byron Price of the AP, now Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations; Edwin C. Hill, now a radio commentator; and Charley Michelson.

Several days before the meeting Walker S. Buel of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* dropped behind after a White House press conference to inform President Harding.

"We're going to relight the altar fires," said Buel.

"Say, I'd like to come," said Harding, fingering a calendar.

Buel, chalking up the remark as one of those things Presidents say and don't mean, promptly forgot it.

On the night of the celebration the hearts game had a full head of steam in the Flemish Room of the Press Club when a wide-eyed boy attendant popped into the room.

"The President of the United States is out at the desk," he mumbled between gasps, "and he wants to know where the game is."

Escorted to the little room past some astonished diners, Harding

quickly shucked his coat and proceeded to dump the unwanted queen of spades on Sam Bell with a regularity that had that little worthy muttering to himself. Harding won \$1.60 and almost contributed to death by heart seizure of Robert Wood, the Negro waiter who had been ministering lavishly to the President's wants. He gave the sum to Robert.

"God bless you, Mr. President," said Robert, who forthwith framed the dollar bill and hung it in his living room at home.

The hearts players at one point suggested delicately that it might be best to break up the game early out of deference to the guest from the White House.

"Not on my account," said Harding, divesting himself of another heart. "Mrs. Harding'll think I'm sick if I get home before midnight."

In the early twenties the public official who most enjoyed Press Club life was Representative Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois, former Speaker of the House in the days when the rebels railed against the rulings of "Czar" Cannon.

"Uncle Joe" habitually ate breakfast at the club and reappeared after the House quit work for the day to play dominoes and dine with his newspaper cronies. It was at the feet of Cannon that Charley Michelson learned dominoes, a game he played until his death in 1948.

Tragedy struck the Press Club January 28, 1922, when two newspapermen were killed in the Knickerbocker Theatre disaster. The roof, weakened by a heavy snowfall, collapsed, crushing ninety-eight persons to death. Louis W. Strayer of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* and Chauncey C. Brainerd of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* together with Mrs. Brainerd lost their lives that night.

For the most part, though, life meandered along serenely for Press Club members, concerned as they were with such perennial problems as the poor quality of club food, wives calling the desk at inopportune times in the poker game, and whether to charge ten cents for a piece of pie.

The only ideological skirmish of note occurred late in the decade when a journalist wandering in Italy suggested during an interview with Mussolini that Il Duce would make a fine member



of the National Press Club. The Fascist boss's newspaper background, it was pointed out, qualified him for membership.

The late J. Fred Essary, august chief of the Baltimore *Sun* bureau and then President of the Press Club, cottoned to the idea, and the Board of Governors duly approved Benito.

Under the rules of the club the name of a prospective member had to be posted. Unless a petition from ten objecting brethren was filed the gentleman automatically earned the right to pay dues.

Unfortunately for Il Duce the posting of his name promptly provoked such a petition of protest. Unfortunately for President Essary he already had cabled Mussolini the glad tidings of his approval by the board.

When the Essary administration announced that Mussolini was not after all a member teacups trembled along Embassy Row. The Italian diplomats put the Press Club on the boycott list, and the usual international reverberations ensued.

It was about this time that correspondents covering the newly elected President, Herbert Hoover, found themselves at Palo Alto, California, with a suddenly announced Hoover trip to South America. They wired home for formal clothes to impress the Latin dignitaries. Robert S. Allen, the mercurial redhead then writing for the *Christian Science Monitor* in pre-"Merry-Go-Round" column days, telegraphed his housekeeper to send his dinner jacket. She complied exactly, sending the jacket—without pants.

It was also about this time that Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon, a timid man of many dollars, attended a club function to make a speech. Frightened by the magnitude of the chore, he slipped into a spoonerism. He called it "the Pless Crub."

Sometimes a fellow wonders how the joint ever survived the decade.

## “We Interrupt This Program . . .”

BY THEODORE F. KOOP

Theodore F. Koop served the Associated Press in the Middle West, New York, and Washington from 1928–41. During World War II he was assistant director of the Office of Censorship and is author of a book on its problems, *Weapon of Silence*. He was later a member of the editorial staff of the *National Geographic Magazine* and is now director of Washington news and public affairs for the Columbia Broadcasting System.

The reception which greeted radio broadcasting, that newest communications infant, when it was placed on the doorstep of Washington journalism not long after the close of World War I was extremely cold. Its swaddling clothes bore no identification marks so that the newspaper corps could not begin to estimate its place on the journalistic family tree, and father naturally reached for his shotgun.

It should scarcely occasion surprise, of course, that the National Press Club did not immediately gather radio news to its bosom. For one thing the infant's cries were as feeble as the crystal sets from which they emanated. They were so feeble in fact that the powerful Richmond *Times-Dispatch*—only a hundred miles away across the Potomac in Virginia—relinquished after a six-months' trial in 1922 one of the first three “telephone licenses” granted to operate a radio station in the South because there was “no future in radio.” For another there was no little concern among the capital press corps that the infant might develop into a Frankenstein's monster—a monster which in the metaphor of one aroused reporter, “might eat the newspaperman out of house and home.”

Whatever the underlying reason for the lethargy, it took the National Press Club a quarter of a century before it gave unqualified official recognition to the new medium. During that period radio newsmen constituted the underprivileged class among the club's membership. In return for regularly paid dues and other less tangible support of club activities they were denied the right to vote or to hold office.

For a while this social inequality was among the least of the broadcasters' worries; they had plenty of more urgent barriers to overcome in the field of news gathering. Among Washington officials—the men who make news—skepticism prevailed, and well it might. How could they foresee radio's future in the field of entertainment, much less in the field of news and public service? The most enthusiastic boosters acknowledged broadcasting was a screwball business.

Americans who clustered intent on the outpouring of horn-shaped loud-speakers were not overly critical of what they heard. Distance—or "DX"—was the magic word; the farther a signal was picked up, the louder the boasts of a dial-twirling set owner. The highest accolade a broadcasting station could receive was a telegram from an awestruck listener: "Program coming in fine." This was like praising a newspaper for its typography, no matter what its columns contained.

So it was natural that the first "fan" telegram to a President of the United States after a broadcast speech referred not to the content of his address, but to its successful transmission halfway across the continent.

"We heard you as plainly as if you had been in our living room," read this historic salute. It was sent to President Warren G. Harding by Senator William M. Calder of New York in the summer of 1923. The senator, comfortable in his Long Island home, had tuned in on a St. Louis speech made by the President during his ill-fated trip to the Pacific Northwest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>When Senator Clarence C. Dill of Washington made the first broadcast from a train speeding between the national capital and Baltimore playwright Channing Pollock sent him a telegram reading, "Congratulations on your moving address."

Samuel F. B. Morse could scarcely have been more pleased over the dispatch of his famous "What hath God wrought" than was Harding over this message. Earl Godwin, veteran member of the National Press Club, happened to be in the President's private car, and Harding showed him the telegram. Whether or not this incident caused Godwin to realize that radio was here to stay, he later became a news broadcaster. At that time, however, he had been doing public-relations work for the Bell Telephone Company, and his first assignment had been to arrange for a newly invented gadget called an amplifier at Harding's inaugural ceremonies on March 4, 1921.

There are historians who date the decadence of oratory from the advent of the public-address system, an adjunct of radio. One undisputed result was its ease on Presidential—and other—larynxes. But when the amplifier was made available for the inauguration it required six months to convince the Congressional committee in charge that the device was not a publicity stunt. Finally Herbert Hoover gave assurances that no trick was involved, and, Godwin recalls, it even took persuasion from Harding himself, who had been a director of a small Ohio telephone company.

The amplification was successful, and Harding's voice boomed across the Capitol Plaza to many more people than otherwise could have heard his words. Again at the funeral of the Unknown Soldier the amplifier was installed. To be sure, it was far from perfect, and the installation required weeks of tinkering. But Harding himself was thoroughly satisfied, and when his special train left for the West in 1923 a loud-speaker was connected to the rear platform. It was first used at Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Thus Washington reporters accompanying the President received a glimpse into techniques that ten and twenty years later were to create far-reaching changes in news operations. They were watching—and hearing—the government and the people getting closer together. They were of two minds about this new medium: one moment they brushed it off as a passing fad; again, they feared that it might eventually endanger their own professions, their own jobs.

Yet the shadow of the future lay over the capital even before Harding's transcontinental journey. Strangely enough this apparition hovered not over the White House nor the halls of Congress, but over the Department of Agriculture. And if it seemed to assume a shape vaguely resembling a tall, lean man in a stovepipe hat its observers could be excused for exclaiming, "Why, it's the shadow of Abraham Lincoln!"

For in 1862 Lincoln had signed a bill creating the Agriculture Department and directing it "to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of the word." Nearly sixty years later Department officials were still taking those instructions literally. They listened to the radio, found it good, and decided that here was yet another way to diffuse agricultural information.

And so in a city where newspapermen were wont to write chiefly about the involvements of politics the first news prepared for radio transmission consisted of farm and market reports. Through the beep beep beep of wireless signals those prosaic dispatches went out over WWV, the Bureau of Standards short-wave station, beginning on December 15, 1920. Five months later the initial voice broadcast of market news was made over KDKA, the pioneer Pittsburgh station whose call letters were familiar to all "DX" fans.

These reports produced a highly practical effect: they standardized prices from farm to market and from one community to another. They ended economic isolation for the individual farmer. They also convinced the Department of Agriculture of the influence of the microphone, and the Department resolved to press its initial advantage. Long before its neighbors in Washington officialdom had awakened to the possibilities of the new medium (as radio often was called well into its maturity), the Department began to write radio scripts and circulate them to broadcasting stations.

So well was the material received that the National Broadcasting Company in 1928—two years after its organization—asked the Department to participate in its *National Farm and Home Hour*.

This was a popular program, and its producers, seeking to broaden its scope, decided to include a few minutes of general news items. The idea was ambitious. Although KDKA had broadcast returns in the 1920 Harding-Cox Presidential election, radio stations subsequently had given only spasmodic treatment to news reports. The obvious reason was that they had no steady source of news. Newspaper publishers, like their Washington correspondents, had become uneasy over the competition of an industry which could take its listeners directly to the scene of big news and could carry information far more rapidly than newsboys. Until 1925 the Associated Press, for example, refused to permit the broadcast of any of its dispatches. Then its directors opened the door very narrowly and very timidly by authorizing radio use of news of transcendent importance.

If the *National Farm and Home Hour* wanted news that was less than transcendent it must find it elsewhere than from press associations or newspapers. The producers turned to David Lawrence, publisher of the *United States Daily*, a Washington journal which specialized in reporting governmental activities. Lawrence was more interested in radio than were many editors; he and Frederick William Wile were among the earliest political commentators. For seven years Lawrence conducted a program on NBC on government affairs. Wile delivered over the Columbia Broadcasting System a weekly fifteen-minute review under the mouth-filling title, *The Political Situation in Washington Tonight*.

Lawrence agreed to an exchange of news. He went further. Because it was evident even in those experimental days that an announcer could not impart the understanding and authority of a reporter, he offered one of his own reporters, H. R. Baukhage, to read the news on the air. Here was the exact combination NBC was seeking: Baukhage had been an actor before he progressed—if that is the word—to a reporter. He went on the show, and *Baukhage Talking* became a familiar self-introduction year after year.

On the basis of radio precedent the *Farm and Home Hour* news should have been flattered by unblushing imitators, but competing newscasts did not immediately arise. Even if other David Law-

rences had appeared with stacks of carefully processed news items more than one radio executive would have waved away the benefactors. Radio was an exciting enterprise, and news often was dull! How many listeners would follow a report on tariff legislation when they could be enjoying the tunes of the Cliquot Club Eskimos?

Instead of newscasts emphasis was placed on "special events." Here was news in the raw. With the magic words "We take you now to . . ." the radio audience could move to ringside seats at a prize fight or a political convention. In fact the public interest for those on-the-scene programs stemmed from broadcasts of the 1924 Democratic National Convention in New York, where ballot after ballot developed dramatic suspense. "Alabama casts twenty-four votes for Oscar W. Underwood" became a chant nationally known and as persistent as that of the tobacco auctioneer two decades later.

Month by month networks and individual stations intensified their competition for "special events" scoops. Never had William Randolph Hearst and his rival New York publishers in the 1890s battled more fiercely for news beats. Enthusiasm once led a crew from WJSV, then the CBS station in Washington, to take a rowboat down the Potomac River to cover a Negro baptism. The broadcast was hailed as an important achievement.

This slap-dash excitement often centered around the White House. Top of the ladder for a radio man was designation as "Presidential announcer." For the first Presidential speeches from the White House the NBC announcer who held this coveted title moved his microphone into the same room. This was intimacy indeed! CBS, coming into the picture two years later, had to leave its microphone in the corridor outside; the announcer peeked through the doorway for his cue. This distinction aroused the ire of the CBS Washington executives, who demanded a place at the Presidential table. The White House complied, but in the close quarters the NBC and CBS announcers virtually talked into each other's microphones. The radio audience heard only gibberish, and the networks agreed to retreat to prepared positions a little farther apart.

Keen competition bred suspicion. In the midst of a speech by Calvin Coolidge NBC's lines failed. Was it sabotage? The likelier answer was that radio equipment still lacked perfection. It was not equipment failure, however, that caused the networks to lose a speech by Herbert Hoover. About to address the signers of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in the East Room of the White House, the President was asked by photographers to stand for some pictures. In their bustling way they cleared the table of microphones, flashed their bulbs, and were gone. Mr. Hoover immediately started reading his manuscript—without waiting for the mikes to be replaced. (This was the luckless President whom announcer Harry Von Zell once introduced on the air as "Hoobert Heever.")

By the time Franklin D. Roosevelt instituted his "fireside chats" the delivery of a Presidential speech had become a major production. The Oval Room of the White House was filled with cabinet members, Presidential aides, friends, and newsreel and still photographers. Left in the open, announcers would have been trampled. To give them a modicum of quiet four velvet booths were installed. In the front curtains were patched isinglass panels through which the announcers could peer at the assemblage. Before each speech they bantered with the President over a perennial question: would he finish "on the nose"? He watched the time carefully and cut his manuscript if necessary while he was reading. Invariably when he had completed his speech he would hold up his watch and exclaim in triumph, "Well, I made it!"

While radio's "special events" producers were leaping from one peak of excitement to another newscasters were plodding slowly uphill. For years most news programs originating in Washington remained spasmodic and were made by newspaper correspondents. The networks dragooned the reporters into the studio by flashing as much as fifty dollars before their startled eyes. Often their scripts were carbon copies of stories filed to their own papers.

But even fat fees did not interest all the press corps. On the 1932 day when United States troops battled bonus marchers on the capital's streets Wells (Ted) Church, CBS special-events director in Washington, pleaded with one reporter after another to describe the scene over the network. Finally he reported to New



York headquarters that he could find no one to do the job. His New York boss was inspired. "Why don't you do it yourself?" he asked, and to his own amazement Church took to the airwaves. NBC finally prevailed upon Oliver Owen Kuhn, managing editor of the *Washington Star*, to make a similar report to its listeners.

Gradually the networks and individual stations developed their own newsmen, garnering most of them from reportorial ranks. These newscasters soon found they had to give up the writing habits of a journalistic lifetime. The polished prose of a who-what-when-where-and-often-why lead sentence produced a conglomeration of syllables that left the reporter breathless. The broadcasters learned to tell stories chronologically instead of in the traditional inverted pyramid style demanded by city editors. Surprisingly they found this new way of writing was the natural way; it was easy to write, easy to read aloud, and easy to hear. Why had no one thought of it before?

The networks set up rudimentary Washington newsrooms, comparable in a sense to the city rooms of newspapers, but at the outset with scarcely the same standards or methods. Newscasters were not subjected to rigid copyreading; they were regarded as "talent," and it was a case of every man for himself rather than a co-ordinated enterprise. One Washington correspondent, invited to appear on a radio news program, was chided afterward because his copy was not completely accurate. "What does it matter on radio?" he asked.

All this time the opposition of newspaper publishers to radio news was growing. The simmering situation reached the boiling point in the election of 1932, when the three press associations—Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service—made available their returns for broadcast use. Newspaper objections were so violent that the AP thereafter stopped all service to the networks; its only concession to radio news was that AP papers owning radio stations could broadcast AP stories for an additional fee. The UP and INS took their cue from the AP action, and radio again had to rely entirely on its own reporters.

The Columbia Broadcasting System decided to turn an obstacle into an opportunity by organizing its own news service to com-

pete with the press associations. In the fall of 1933 it set up bureaus in the principal American cities. For the opening day CBS was anxious to obtain an exclusive story that would immediately establish its prestige and competitive strength. The New York office came up with a suggestion: an interview with Senator William E. Borah, the powerful Republican foreign affairs leader, on the burning question of recognition of Russia. But Borah was at home in Idaho. In a long-distance telephone conversation CBS explained its wishes frankly. Borah acceded to the request, and a few hours later dictated an exclusive statement. CBS was jubilant, and after it had broadcast Borah's words it gave them to the press with no little satisfaction. The early jubilation was multiplied a thousandfold when the *New York Times* used the statement on page one—with CBS credit. No longer was radio news a stepchild.

This CBS offensive in the press-radio war, plus overtures from NBC, helped bring about fresh discussions between network executives and the press associations. No longer, the networks argued, could the news services ignore radio. Finally a compromise was reached, and an organization called the Press-Radio Bureau came into being in March 1934. To this bureau the three press associations sent all their dispatches without charge. Editors in New York processed this news for radio use, charging off the cost of operation to the networks. The service was hedged with restrictions: the program could not be sponsored, and only two newscasts a day would be provided, one for use after 9:30 A.M. and the other after 9 P.M. so as not to compete with morning and afternoon papers. In addition transcendental—that familiar word again—news would be furnished promptly. If the networks were not entirely happy with this arrangement, neither were the newspapers. Whatever the faults of the compromise as viewed from either side, it did have the definite result of putting newscasts on the air on regular schedules. And their widespread use caused the public to become more and more conscious of radio as a news source.

A year later UP and INS were ready to offer their wire reports for sale directly to radio stations. Transradio Press, a newly formed

service, also was available to broadcasters. Washington stations promptly took advantage of these facilities, which provided them with world news as well as detailed coverage of the capital. NBC expanded its newsroom to an extent almost beyond belief; it put *two* editors on duty and regularly sent an office boy to the National Press Building for UP ticker copy. Announcers, though, read most of this press-association news; newsmen who were doing regular or occasional broadcasts devoted their time to reporting or commenting on events which they themselves had covered.

In making the rounds of Washington the radio reporters still encountered a cool reception not only from newspaper correspondents, but also from government officials. To a congressman or a federal department head a newscast was ephemeral. Unless he happened to hear it himself he never was quite sure what it said about him, whereas a newspaper produced tangible clippings. The networks often sent limousines to bring officials to the studios when they were broadcasting a speech or taking part in a forum lest they ignore the appointment.

Even the Supreme Court shied away from acting on an early case involving government regulation of radio. Chief Justice William Howard Taft told a friend, "When I come to interpret the law on radio I shall feel that I am dealing with the occult. I want to put it off just as long as possible." The Court decided that it had no jurisdiction in the pending issue.

The greatest handicap to radio newsmen was the fact that they were barred from the Senate and House press galleries. They were outsiders, with no facilities at the Capitol to expedite their work. No credentials gave them legitimate standing in their craft. They had to compete with sightseers for public gallery seats. Officially at least they had no access to the press tables at committee hearings. They had to take a chance on finding an unoccupied telephone booth when they had a hot bulletin.

Fulton Lewis Jr., a Mutual commentator who had entered radio with a weekly hunting and fishing program over WRC, decided to test the ban. He formally applied for membership in the press galleries, and with equal formality his application was rejected. Here on a local scale developed the same battle which had been

fought out nationally between the networks and the newspapers controlling the press associations.

Determined to win equality for himself and his colleagues, Lewis started a campaign for entirely separate radio galleries in the Senate and House. If broadcasters could not play in the newspapermen's yard, they would build a separate yard for themselves. Lewis persuaded Senators Guy Gillette of Iowa and Warren Barbour of New Jersey and Representative John J. Dempsey of New Mexico to introduce resolutions to establish the galleries. Such a grave issue required hearings. The Standing Committee of Correspondents, reciting the long and honorable history of the press galleries, testified that they were overcrowded. The Senate and the House made everyone happy by voting separate radio galleries in April 1939—exactly a hundred years after the Senate first had set aside a few gallery seats for newspapermen.

The House immediately designated a small room on the gallery floor, and Robert M. Menaugh was installed as superintendent. This momentous event naturally called for special ceremonies, and on May 20 dedicatory exercises took place with oratorical flourishes. The gaiety was marred only when Representative Joseph W. Martin Jr. of Massachusetts, the Republican leader, lost a fine Panama hat. Once the formalities were over the guests trooped down to the "Board of Education Room" of the Democratic leadership to toast the correspondents' victory. Within two hours Baukhage made the first broadcast from the new quarters.

Twenty-six radio reporters were given accreditation cards, and they formed the Congressional Radio Correspondents Association. The organization undertook a dual function: supervision of the radio galleries under Congressional authority and promotion of the radio-news fraternity. The latter included protection of the correspondents' "rights and privileges" and maintenance of high reportorial standards. Fulton Lewis Jr. became the first president in appreciation of his leadership in establishing the galleries. Serving with him on the executive committee were William R. McAndrew, Fred W. Morrison, and Albert L. Warner. And the patron saints, of course, were Senators Gillette and Barbour and Representative Dempsey.

The gallery opened in the nick of time for a gala event—the visit to Washington of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain in June 1939. Fortified by his new credentials, a broadcaster from each network was permitted in the rotunda on the day Their Majesties visited the Capitol. But of equal or even greater importance was the fact that wives of radio correspondents rated equally with the wives of newspapermen and were given tickets for seats on the Capitol Plaza. What did it matter if the National Press Club still snubbed the radio newsmen?

Behind the fanfare of the royal visit could be heard the drums of war. The Senate radio gallery was barely ready for the special session of Congress called by President Roosevelt in September following the German invasion of Poland. The formal opening was delayed until February 15, 1940, when Baukhage again made the initial broadcast. D. Harold McGrath was appointed superintendent.

Congressional approval clothed the radiomen in new garments of respectability. No longer could they be treated as country cousins whose gaucheries might prove slightly embarrassing. Officials in downtown government departments, always alert to the mood of Congress, backslapped the broadcasters and warmly invited them to "come in anytime." Several departments, notably State, War, and Navy, installed special branches in their public-relations offices to handle technical radio problems. By common consent press conferences came to be called "news conferences" or "press-radio conferences."

Coincidentally with this newly found fellowship war in Europe was giving radio tremendous importance as a news medium. The German bombers and panzer units moved too rapidly for linotypes and printing presses. Supplementing direct broadcasts from European capitals were dispatches from the sixty-word-a-minute tickers of the press associations, for the Press-Radio Bureau had quietly dissolved in 1938, and now even the Associated Press was selling its report directly to broadcasting stations. From Washington fully staffed news departments of the networks were telling of the bases-for-destroyers trade, the Lend-Lease program, the draft, and the frantic industrial expansion.

Then on December 7, 1941, radio spoke calmly. "The White House has announced that Japanese planes have attacked Pearl Harbor." The announcers' voices were tense but restrained. From their homes, from the football game at Griffith Stadium broadcasters dashed to their studios that bleak winter afternoon. Hour after hour they brought to the microphone bulletins from the White House, the State Department, Congress, the Army, and the Navy.

On that "day of infamy"—twenty-one years after the Harding-Cox election returns had signalized its birth—radio news cast off its adolescence. No longer did its voice break with uncertainty or emotion; it spoke firmly, confidently. Years of experimentation, of trial and error had brought results.

For Washington radio reporters the war days became crowded days. The number of news programs increased. News conferences of government officials—on and off the record—multiplied. Staffs were short; many a broadcaster was drafted or went overseas as a war correspondent. The news from the home front was far from glamorous, yet it was vital. Like their colleagues of the press the radio newsmen won and held the confidence of military leaders. And through the voluntary censorship they kept the military secrets entrusted to them.

Tension built up to June 1944, when Allied invasion of Europe was expected momentarily. Radio correspondents paced Pentagon offices nervously during the early hours of June 6, but on the official announcement they were by-passed. The Army Signal Corps had set up a special circuit from London to network headquarters in New York, and over this circuit at 3:32 A.M. came the quiet voice of Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy, SHAEF public relations officer well known to Washington newsmen:

Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France.

For the next fourteen months the crescendo of news kept rising to the distant accompaniment of bombs and shells. President Roosevelt died, and Washington broadcasters stayed in their

studios for long hours reading his biography, chronicling tributes from sorrowing officials, reporting the solemn swearing-in of Harry S. Truman. They stood on Constitution Avenue during the funeral procession, and their voices broke as the caisson creaked along, the staccato clatter of the horses' hoofs echoing into the microphones.

V-E Day arrived, and in jubilant tones the broadcasters read President Truman's victory proclamation and speculated on the early conquest of Japan. The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and they reported the incident in matter-of-fact manner, with little initial comprehension of its awful potentialities. One commentator devoted a minute to the atomic bomb and ten minutes to the death of Senator Hiram Johnson of California. The isolationist senator was within his realm of understanding; as yet the atomic bomb was not.

When Japan's surrender was in sight the networks parked their mobile units in front of the White House, ready to flash the end of hostilities. President Truman made the announcement on August 14, 1945, and the radio reporters rushed pell-mell from his office, almost too breathless to speak the eagerly awaited words to a listening nation.

Then back to the routine of peace. News programs were pared in number, but the public was too thoroughly conditioned to getting news from the radio, and schedules could not be cut too sharply. Wire and tape recorders—and later recorded telephone conversations—opened a new field of on-the-scene reporting. Events which proved too lengthy or otherwise unsuitable for a direct pickup could be recorded, edited, and played on the air at a convenient time.

This new technique operated with particular success during the stormy Senate committee hearings on the Howard Hughes war-plane contracts in August 1947. Thousands of Americans who could not have turned from daytime work to hear "live" broadcasts of the sessions listened avidly to condensed versions at night. Again radio used this method of reporting the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee in August 1948, when Alger Hiss confronted Whittaker Chambers, who had accused

him of turning over classified State Department documents to a Communist group in prewar Washington.

So far did postwar news activities return to the normal give-and-take of politics that Washington correspondents could concern themselves with the status of radio newsmen in the National Press Club. Their consciences were twinging a bit over the realization that they had kept these men in the ranks of second-class citizens for a quarter of a century. Active membership was proposed. Members who once would have pounded the bar in vehement opposition were silent; they conceded that these interlopers handled news.

But the Press Club constitution proved almost as difficult to amend as the Constitution of the United States. Twice the suggested amendment was brought to a vote, once at an annual meeting and once by mail ballot. On both occasions the proposition lost through inertia. There simply was not sufficient interest to obtain the necessary quorum.

In a liberal mood the Press Club nestors decided to give radio one more chance. A special meeting was called in May 1948. Every member on the premises was corralled, and in the club library the official emancipation ceremonies took place. The parliamentary proceedings were painless. The proposed amendment was read, a voice vote was taken, and it was all over. The club constitution was changed to give active membership to "those whose principal work involves the gathering, writing, or editing of news for dissemination by radio, television or facsimile."

The precise phraseology had occasioned no little preliminary debate. On the one hand the club wanted to make certain that only bona fide newsmen, not announcers or entertainers, were admitted. On the other hand what might the future hold in regard to television and facsimile transmission of news? The club did not want to be caught napping a second time.

In 1949, a decade after Congress established separate radio galleries, news broadcasters could look around and find that most doors in the capital were as wide open to them as to their brothers of the press. Membership in the Radio Correspondents Associa-



tion had grown sixfold from the original twenty-six to one hundred and fifty-three. The six seats first set aside for these men and women in the House and Senate had trebled. The four nationwide networks—American Broadcasting Company, Columbia Broadcasting System, Mutual Broadcasting System, and National Broadcasting Company—were operating Washington newsrooms equivalent in size and procedure to those of the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* bureaus. They maintained news editors who made assignments and edited copy. They covered the major stories, and at the White House and on Presidential trains their correspondents were as familiar figures as the press-association reporters. The four Washington stations allied with the networks carried close to a hundred thousand words of news a day, not to mention interviews, forums, and other special-events programs involving government officials.

In addition to the networks thirteen independent stations were broadcasting in Washington and its suburbs. Representing these and individual out-of-town stations were nearly half of the accredited radio newsmen. Correspondents for the out-of-town stations emulated their opposite numbers of the press by interviewing the senators and representatives from their states, handling other news with home-town angles, and presenting their own commentaries on the Washington scene. The only difference was in technique; where the newspaper writers sent their copy by telegraph or mail, the radio reporters for the most part recorded their material and air expressed the "platters" to their stations.

This constantly increasing group testified not only to the development of radio news, but also to the unparalleled importance of Washington as a world news center. Washington originations constituted the bulk of the networks' domestic news programs; such varied commentators, analysts, and newscasters as Elmer Davis, Albert L. Warner and Drew Pearson of ABC, Eric Sevareid and Joseph C. Harsch of CBS, and Bill Henry of Mutual, and Richard Harkness and Morgan Beatty of NBC made their headquarters in the capital. And their New York colleagues found it desirable to make frequent visits to the banks of the Potomac in order to keep abreast of national and international events.

Edging its way into the forefront of journalistic attention was the glamorous offshoot of the radio industry: television. Washington newspapermen and radiomen alike found they could take television or leave it alone—until the telecasting of the 1948 political conventions enthralled them. Many a newspaper reporter at the Philadelphia assemblages quickly learned he could do as good a job—and certainly a pleasanter one—by sitting before a television screen in an air-conditioned room than by squirming on a hard bench in the sweltering convention hall.

And the radio reporters who appeared before the television cameras thoroughly enjoyed the experience. They liked the informality of the programs; there was not the driving necessity of speaking every moment lest “dead air” cause listeners to spin the dial. They might not admit it, but they also liked the theatrical quality of the shows, for underneath his journalistic exterior there is a little of the ham actor in every radioman. Only one requirement caused a little grumbling: the truly photogenic newsman had to be freshly shaved just before going into the studio.

Insistence on good grooming created an anticlimax for President Truman’s first television appearance at the White House. The President sat, a trifle stiffly, behind a desk. The cameras were focused, the papers were carefully arranged for his speech opening the Luckman food-conservation drive. But Mr. Truman’s bow tie chose that moment to dip at a sharp angle. Bryson Rash of the American Broadcasting Company leaned across the desk to adjust it. He was fast, but not quite fast enough, for at that instant the show went on the air. The television audience saw not the President of the United States, but a complete rear view of perfectionist Rash.

Six months after the Philadelphia conventions President Truman’s inauguration brought Washington its first big television spectacle. The capital’s four television stations pooled their operations. Cameras focused sharply on the Chief Executive as he took the oath of office and delivered his inaugural address. Then they swept the length of Pennsylvania Avenue as West Point cadets, Annapolis midshipmen, and beautiful girls in state floats paraded

past spectators not lucky enough to have television sets in their own or neighbors' homes.

By inauguration time the Washington stations were gingerly experimenting with local news programs; NBC was showing a daily newsreel prepared by its own staff. As in the early days of radio, however, "special events" held the principal interest. A completely successful formula for presenting straight news on the television screen had not yet been found. A single newscaster reading or ad-libbing the news provided little attraction, but a reporter interviewing two or three senators could be viewable as well as listenable.

Thus was the news wheel turning—from newspapers to radio—from radio to television. Just as Washington correspondents in the 1920s had worried over the upstart loud-speakers, uneasy news broadcasters now were pondering the effect of television on "old-fashioned" radio. Would the cameras supplant unseen newscasts? Would reporters be selected for their telegenic features?

In the benign smiles of the older newspapermen many broadcasters believed they had found the answer to their questions. Radio had not put newspapers out of business. On the contrary the two media had come to complement each other and to increase the public desire and demand for news. Having done so once, the lion and the lamb again could lie down together.

## Moisture, a Trace

BY HOMER JOSEPH DODGE

Homer Joseph Dodge was born in Cleveland, Ohio. Because of family connections with the White House, his acquaintance with the Washington scene virtually began on the lap of President William McKinley. He has been a Washington newspaperman and public-relations counsel since 1910, is a former editor of *Bankers' Information Service*, and a founder of *Editorial Research Reports*. He is the author of *Pursuit of a Whisper* and *It Depends on the Wind*. He is now Washington correspondent of the Committee for Constitutional Government.

To save grain and perhaps to season the lawmakers who had adopted the Eighteenth Amendment the Congress enacted war-time prohibition, which became effective in the District of Columbia and on other federal reservations at midnight June 30, 1919. This was more than six months before the Prohibition Amendment itself came into force on January 16, 1920, inundating the United States with the miscellaneous wetness of bathtub gin, right-off-the-boat scotch, and all those other benefits which, half a generation later, the victims of Repeal were to learn to long for.

The bar of the National Press Club in those days was one of the smallest, coziest, and on the night of June 30 the most crowded in the world. It was not an unusual experience to have the little bar—two tables with embracing high-backed benches facing the two-or-three-yard-long mahogany itself—well populated. During World War I men of all the world frequented it. Turbanned Indian rubbed elbows with kilted Scots Highlander and blue-

bloused French officers courteously jostled the gorgeously garbed Bersaglieri, while more drab soldiers of English and American regiments lent contrast. Now and then even a civilian could be descried against the rigadoon of color.

On the Day of Judgment the club placed on sale its cellar, which was not mean. At first case goods moved at cost; as the hours passed it became apparent that the club would be left in illegal possession of ardent and spirituous liquors. Quite early, beer was free on tap. With supply and dead line converging, prices of champagnes and fine brandies, old wines and proud whiskies dwindled steadily toward midnight, when on the dirging stroke all that was left was set out on the tables of the main dining room, the Flemish Room, and the lounge for the having of anyone with desire and strength to grasp them. Thus wartime prohibition came to the National Press Club!

It had been widely predicted that the National Press Club would persist as a pool of refreshment in a weary land despite what President Calvin Coolidge later was cautiously to call the Prohibitory Law. It had been enviously felt that the press would bring to bear its blackmail influences upon the enforcement powers and so save its members harmless from invasion of their private rights. The reverse proved true. Well aware of what had been expected, the club drew fanatically away from danger of the imputation and became for a dreary time probably the driest club, press or otherwise, in America!

The Board passed strict ordinances in support of the law. For a period not even set-ups could be provided for members bringing their own liquor into the club, a practice itself forbidden. In no time at all bootlegging started among waiters, and several were discharged summarily by the chairman of the House Committee. The Board of Governors disciplined members for infractions of rules designed to uphold the high standard of purity which had been decreed.

The club quarters then were in the structure which had changed its pleasant and historic and dignified name from the Riggs Building to the Albee Building, and in that edifice were

many newspaper offices. Across G Street stood the old Home Life Building, filled almost from top to bottom with newspaper correspondents' offices. Down Fourteenth was the National Metropolitan Bank Building, similarly occupied, while within a city block's range in three directions were yet other like warrens. No statistician ever has been sufficiently inspired even to estimate the volume of strong waters which in those days could be found in those almost uniformly hospitable quarters! Against the lapping of this ever rising tide from outside its peculiar walls the club could not indefinitely stand firm. Liquor crept into the precincts, either borne by members or floating them in on its own ardent flooding seepage, disturbing, comforting!

That incidents, memorable as half-forgotten perfume, should occur was as inevitable as a process of fermentation. Every member cherishes some tale of wassail. One which might be regarded as being invested (at this late date) with a measure of historic interest had to do with the visit to the club of Edward, Prince of Wales. It was no state secret that His Royal Highness had a nice taste in scotch whisky.

Now in those days the club was favored with the services of a steward who in his own field assuredly was as skillful as any veteran Washington correspondent in his. This young steward's field was wide and included access to the real stuff. He was commissioned to procure at the charges of the club a case of scotch. At what hour he achieved delivery in his own custody can be gauged only by use of his own person as a sort of hour glass. But it is certain that by evening when the Prince was due to arrive his mood was lightsome, unwearied, and enthusiastic. He felt a personal interest in the event; indeed as the moments sped it is probable that he began to feel that the Prince was his own particular guest.

So it was with no slight degree of impatience that he watched the formal round of introductions by the President of the club (Mr. Earl Godwin, newsman later turned radio commentator) of members to the Prince. As the members passed through the receiving line, some rapidly, some pausing to chat, the steward's impatience mounted. At length he could bear it no longer. Slip-

ping between the President and Edward, he delivered what he intended to be a sly nudge, but which actually was a tremendous jolt of the elbow in His Royal Highness's ribs which nearly bore him down while he invited in a hissing whisper like a noon steam whistle, "Have a little drink, Prince?"

There are so many stories.

#### THE TURF CLUB

With acres of kings' palaces at his disposal, Napoleon I selected for his office one of the smallest rooms he could find. From the Small Cabinet of the Tuileries he ruled Europe. Some kindred impulse may or may not have prompted a certain few members of the National Press Club in choosing as their crowded, spasmodic meeting place the smallest room in the club quarters. The architects had planned it for use as a one-chair barbershop. Perhaps because the bowl for running water which had been installed provided a convenient place to keep cakes of cracked ice, it was deemed ideal. Also it had a certain scornful aloofness from the more stuffily spacious splendors of the wider reaches of the club.

An interior group of the Press Club, the Turf Club had no fixed membership. Not more than ten persons could occupy the small cabinet with ease and comfort; oftentimes from twenty to thirty occupied it with joy! The membership was presumed to be drawn solely from members of the parent club, but there was no snobbish rule against the introduction of guests if they proved to be of the right kidney.

Compartments in the tier of metal lockers were held by prescription by some individuals, conjointly by others. There was room for casual storage on top of the lockers. Indeed so deep was the general feeling of good will toward men that few of the lockers were kept locked and those but capriciously, when the keyholders thought of the gesture. The assortment of Mason jars, of Dykeman-orange-juice gallon jars, of conventionally shaped bottles bearing labels having little save a reminiscent connection with the contents, and almost every other sort of container save

baskets or Wedgwood fruit dishes crowded the shelves of these lockers, doubtless originally designed for a golf or tennis club locker room. These containers held curiously grouped molecules of matter of a strength and fortitude far surpassing the strength and fortitude displayed at Olympic Games!

The Turf Room or, as it was alternately called, the Paddock, was in the new quarters in the National Press Building. Why that name was chosen is not known. The frequenters exhibited no unusual enthusiasm for either turf or paddock. Rarely was there any betting or gambling, so often the room was too crowded. Oh, occasionally when the numbers thinned out there might be a few hands at cards. The pleasant, faintly vicious sound of falling dice was not unknown. But for the most part the time was spent in deep and incredibly miscellaneous discussion.

Meals could be served in the Paddock and were. There was one table, rather too large for the room, with on one side of it a long oaken bench which had sentimentally been fetched from the little bar of the old club and on the other a number of broken-down chairs. Stuffing crept quietly but steadily from the upholstery of all these pieces. No matter. The shabby Paddock was to many a member what the torn rag doll is to the child who has but studied neglect for daintier creations.

The Turf Club had no officers; no minutes were kept. But that narrow space knew many of the leading spirits of Washington journalism. Among members as well as guests were distinguished legislators, holders of high office, jurists. Many a man whose name meant much in the world was known to point a wee finger at the ceiling! A political party was formed there; that is, a Press Club political party. It was tinged with liberalism and persuaded that the unco guid and the rigidly righteous should not rule the Press Club. On one historic election day this Turf Club Party bore one of its number triumphantly to victory as President of the entire club!

But today the Turf Club's Paddock houses the machinery of an air-conditioning unit which vies in temperament with the old members. Whiles it has been a broom closet in the days since Repeal befell, whiles a lumber room. The tinkling of ice in



glasses with tall sides no longer is heard, no longer of afternoons and evenings the strains of uninhibited singing. That is all gone today—gone with the wind and russet apples! Ah me!

#### THE WASHINGTON NEWSPAPER CLUB

Mike was a noble Genoese who unquestionably would have looked as much at home on a gun deck at Lepanto, with the Spanish Armada or with that great Admiral of the Ocean Sea, Columbus himself, as he did in his small restaurant down on old Ohio Avenue behind the District Building. Tall, broad and, swart, with flashing eyes, wide-sweeping mustaches, and a deep, tranquil, musical voice, Mike was a man and also a hero-worshiper. The City Hall and police reporters whose pressroom was in the District Building were the first to find Mike and his restaurant and to learn of his hero-worship. Mike's little Italian restaurant served meals which were equally grateful to the young reporter's palate and to his meager purse. He could do things to a steak, to meat balls and spaghetti, and with salads that were a challenge to Brillat-Savarin. Then there was always red wine and other things. And all for—well, a man could almost give a dinner party for a dollar.

The Glutton was as much of a lure as the food, so curiously prepared in real olive oil. He was a vast Italian whose calling, save that of eating, was a trifle vague. Daily he spent hours at Mike's, and daily he was gazed upon with intense admiration by the other Italians who frequented the place. And by the reporters. It would be idle to list the viands The Glutton regularly consumed. But the time came when he learned that the feast was ended and the lamps expiring. He was forbidden to eat anything but salad and perhaps a little wine for his stomach's sake, as St. Paul allows.

In those days the buildings stood well back from the willow-shaded Ohio Avenue. For hours The Glutton would rest in a huge chair placed for him on the grass plot in the shade, awaiting the salad hour. For he concluded that he would have but one meal a day. It was served about dusk. Mike had what must at some time have served as a huge punch bowl. In it he would mix

The Glutton's salad. An equal portion would have been adequate to serve all the other guests! With an effort singlehanded, but sometimes with help, Mike would place the vast bowl before The Glutton. There is some difference of opinion as to whether it took five or ten minutes for The Glutton to consume the entire bowl. The change of diet came too late, and The Glutton did not last many months thereafter, but he had served to introduce the press to Mike and Mike to the press.

Due in part at least to the increased patronage attracted by The Glutton, Mike felt important enough to move to a slightly more pretentious place uptown. Even more newspapermen patronized his restaurant then, and indeed it began to take on the character of a newspaper headquarters. Then followed the idea of creating a newspaper club from this nucleus. For a while it was established in an old house on the west side of Eleventh Street with front and back entrances and then removed to its pleasantest domicile across the street. In a shabby old building next to the firehouse perfect quarters were found. One wound through corridors and went up and down short steps as in Bleak House and then tapped cabalistically on a door. It must be remembered that this was all in the days when one said he knew Charlie Duckworth.

There was an actual club. It was the Washington Newspaper Club. Dues were intermittently paid, and officers were elected. But, unlike so many press clubs, it had no operative problems whatever. Mike held what probably should be termed a concession. He brought with him John of Turin, a sort of partner, and then there was The Cook. He never was known by any other designation. Later they brought Dante from overseas, a Tuscan god of a youth whose manly beauty would drive a sculptor or painter mad. All, save perhaps Dante, were cooks and all were waiters. And all on occasion sat at the tables with the members of the Washington Newspaper Club.

As you entered through the labyrinthine passage there was a longish room the walls of which had been most fantastically decorated by murals—the work of some newspaper artist who had found an outlet. The murals were brilliant and vaguely suggestive

of struggle among Picasso, Rivera, Michelangelo and an outdoor sign painter. No one could deny them character!

Beyond that through a narrow door was what doubtless had been long aforetime a kitchen. In both rooms were tables large and small which could if need be be pulled together. In the back room was a fireplace of generous size, and here, too, the crawling murals were found, albeit obscured by smoke. No hours obtained in this club. If the Italians felt like it and several members were there it remained open around the clock. At a word, even a gesture, one could quickly obtain a meal. If it were rudely served, if the variety were narrow, yet not another restaurant in town could surpass its quality.

But most curious of all was the beverage which became as a very nectar. It would be thankless to call it beer; perhaps inaccurate to call it mead; it was not ale in the accepted term, nor could any wine ever grown meet its anonymous challenge. There was a legend that in the adjoining small room used as the kitchen there stood a huge barrel into which the Italians tossed anything for which there was no instant culinary demand, tossed it there to undergo some mysterious process of fermentation, generation, and regeneration. It is not recalled that there was any lagering season, any definite period of aging, any exact period of any kind. It was in its own recondite way what the French *pot au feu* is.

From this barrel tall glasses—larger than the usual barroom beer glasses—were filled and served. The nectar was of a savor all its own; it was beyond any conventional identification. Captious newcomers had been known to make some passing aspersions about the bouquet, but any such idle prejudice was short-lived. After all what could one expect from such a barrel so placed and so used! True, one could obtain gin and whisky there, and the daintier souls would cling to those known mild beverages. But the strong characters of the Washington Newspaper Club would not have foregone Mike's drink for the richest cellars in all the world! They knew strength, they knew character, they knew that a grail of Mike's repugnant, heartsome, subtle drink was a passport to the inner meaning of life!

Early in its career the Washington Newspaper Club was raided

as a speakeasy. It was not known what became of the raiders. There are remote harness beats in the suburbs. The press of Washington and other cities, half Washington officialdom, some of its best society stood aghast at such a breach of all the decencies. It did not happen again.

There was scant ceremony. Men and—later—women ate at such tables as pleased them. There were small, intimate groups of two or less. For example, there was an arranger of orchestral scores who dined and drank as a rule with himself and his music, and on the sheets of many dulcet chamber-music compositions when they appeared on musicians' stands were smears of gravy or liquor. There were larger groups, and sometimes tables would be drawn together and many would foregather for deep converse on comparative religion, the trend of literature, political maneuvers, reminiscences of sporting events—indoor and out—and the state of the world! Public men, writers—both men and women—actors, grave jurists, artists, and always a sprinkling of crusaders for this cause or that—people whose names made news, people who lived news—were the guests or members of this extraordinary club.

At any time, of course, but especially of cold winter nights there would be singing around the roaring fire in the back room, enriched by the fine swelling voices of the Italians. The chairs were hard, the tables bare of napery, the china and tableware something less than elegant, but it is probable that the Washington Newspaper Club knew many of the keenest, ablest, wittiest minds in the country—along with a proper leavening of others of lesser note.

It came to an end as all good things, it seems, must. The first downward step was forced when the landlord determined to remodel his building, chiefly to make room for shops, beauty parlors, dentists' offices, and the like. The club found larger quarters across the alley, larger and far, far different. The new quarters were in comparison splendid. With splendor the club lost its character; the bright new clubrooms lacked something which the lousy roach-ridden old joint had to bestow: they had no benison to offer. Table cloths and napkins were introduced,

and something in the nature of parties were given. (In the old place parties gave themselves.) The final ignominy came when with Repeal the Washington Newspaper Club formally took out a liquor license! Inevitably it faded away. Like Iago, its occupation was gone!

#### THE BAR STRIKE

It is an honored custom that when some tall lad has spent a bitter night at the cards, not favored by God, stripped of his last quarter, and feeling as though beaten with rods, some kindly bartender shall perform anew and without charge the miracle of Cana and turn destitution into a momentary harmonious wine of well-being. Always without charge and with compassion. Such a heartening episode occurred one morning in 1938 in the taproom of the National Press Club. There lies no safety of mind in analyzing the motive of a casual informer, but it is enough to report that such a one did run to the President of the club (Mr. Harold Brayman, then of the *Philadelphia Ledger*) and say that the club bartender was giving away drinks!

Summarily the bartender was suspended one week without pay!

Now George Miller had tended bar in the Press Club taproom for some years. It was known that his varicose-veined legs had come near to failing him in the club's service (long hours of standing behind the mahogany is not a light task), and his perennial geniality and kindness were held in high esteem.

So when the customers began to drift in—the suffering brother had been there when the bar first opened—there was question concerning George. Another bartender stood somewhat diffidently in his place. Aled Davies of the Gannett papers was about the first, and then publicist Sam Jones—sound men both. They learned the story and began to brood. As others—Frank Healey (attorney and ex-miner), Harvey Jacob (then counsel for the club), Ralph Collins (*New York Sun* and *Washington Times*)—came in, their brooding bore fruit in a determination to take up a collection by way of protest to pay George's salary during the week of his suspension. As a member would enter the taproom he

would be accosted and the case stated. Without exception the newcomer made his contribution, anything from a quarter to a dollar.

It would be difficult to give proper credit for the burgeoning of the full-blown idea which sprang from this seedling. Mayhap it was the spontaneous inspiration of several, but almost imperceptibly the benefit collection turned into that profound political weapon, the bar strike. To those of deeper feelings there seemed something almost shameful about buying from a bar which rejected the respected canon of a free drink to him in dire need of succor! Some noble soul descended to the liquor store in the lobby and brought back a quart of sound liquor. Almost immediately, this was augmented by other contributions. Quietly these offerings were placed upon the tables—not the bar—in the taproom. Drinks were offered freely to any member who entered.

If some member did not instantly recognize the lengthening line seated at the tables and turned to the bar to buy himself a drink he was hailed and invited to partake. Of course the phenomenon was explained. Always the newcomer took the rebels' drink in preference to buying at the bar and usually contributed to the fund. In a short time enough cash had been collected to more than make up George Miller's weekly salary, but something had been started not susceptible of easy control.

By this time the stock of liquor on the tables was extensive and miscellaneous. Scotch, bourbon, rye, Irish and bottled beer in tubs of ice were there in straggling array. In those days the late Charles Stewart of Central Press was accustomed to enter the taproom every fifteen minutes for a glass of port. Mr. Stewart did his writing upstairs in the club writing room and steadfastly declined to take a bottle of port and a glass there because, as he explained, he might drink too much. But chronometers were set by the regularity of his fifteen-minute-interval appearances in the taproom. So even a bottle of port was provided for him.

Either for his health or some other recondite purpose columnist Heywood Broun was not drinking at the moment, but when he entered and heard what was forward he instantly joined the long bench of strikers and contributed to the store in addition to

whiskies, gins, and the like a vast metal tub of ice from which peeped containers of buttermilk and tomato juice. He took for the text of his column that day the Press Club bar strike.

As the day wore on a few orders came in from the cardroom and from the ladies' dining room, orders from persons who had not learned of the epochal event under the same roof. Those orders ceased when the occupants of those rooms were apprised.

The day passed, and the evening. There were, of course, relays of members occupying the long benches and chairs of the taproom and also, and in spite of utter absence of occupation there were relays of bartenders. There is a legend that Jack Madden read *Anthony Adverse* during his tricks at the bar.

About the second day the Board of Governors met in special session and sent an emissary to the strikers in the taproom. They were notified that they were suspended. Names were taken. Members rushed to give their names. They sat, they and their successors. Hour of day and hour of night passed with never a need for a quorum call. Throughout Sunday the strike continued. The new week began. The board had been in session almost as continuously as the strikers, save that they lacked the endless supply of reliefs the members could depend upon.

Now it must be remembered that the National Press Club is a concern with heavy operating expenses. It is the consistent claim of the House Committee that it costs the club about fifty cents every time a member sits down at a table for a meal, so heavy is the overhead, and that there is a staggering annual deficit in the restaurant department. That deficit regularly is made up at the bar. But there were no bar receipts. That is, none to mention. The records show that, compared with the hundreds of dollars ordinarily dependable, the club had taken in some eight dollars and twenty-five cents over a period of days and nights, and that only by mistake.

In desperation the board sent a special emissary, one of its members, to treat with the recalcitrants. He was Mr. Clifford Prevost (afterwards president of the Club). The Board asked what was demanded. A committee was hastily formed of the leading malcontents and a sort of ultimatum drawn; that is, ulti-

matum in the sense that unless the demands were granted the strike would continue indefinitely. (There's fighting blood in the National Press Club!) The ultimatum demanded, first, instant reinstatement of George Miller with full pay; second, withdrawal of the suspensions passed on the strikers; and, third, creation of a bar committee which in future should have sole disciplinary jurisdiction in the taproom.

Well, there was running back and forth by the emissary, with the board seeking to modify the demands. But there was no flagging. The strikers sat firm. Not one cent went into the bar till. At length the Board of Governors capitulated and granted the demands.

Enough liquor remained on the tables to stock almost any bar. By acclamation it was turned over to the club. In addition to his club pay George received about two extra weeks' equivalent from the pool collected and reappeared at his post, his legs momentarily rested. Jack Madden almost finished *Gone With The Wind*.

Several Boards of Governors have served since then, but members of that august body to this day will turn pale at the mere whisper of "bar strike!"



## “ . . . And Here We Sit Today!”

BY HUGH MORROW

Hugh Morrow is an associate editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* stationed in Washington, where he was formerly correspondent of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The National Press Building in Washington is a 125,000-ton monument to the fantastic finances of the twenties. It was at the outset created out of a dream, a dollar, a bottle of bootleg scotch whisky, and a Press Club member's pledge that never again would he sing "Annie Laurie" in his off-key baritone. At least he promised that he would never sing it again in the presence of a real-estate broker who exacted the pledge because he was fond of the tune.

The building was started with high hopes, wild risk-taking on the part of a handful of club members, and with the support of the Press Club. That support, however, was far from undivided. In fact important segments of the American press and their Washington correspondents vigorously opposed the project. Newspapermen, they argued, had no business dabbling in real estate—and particularly not in the promotion of Washington's largest private office building. They were overruled, and the building stands today as a solid and stable institution. Yet its history in its earlier years is one of travail. The Press Building was financed on a shoestring, refinanced, went bankrupt, and was reorganized in the nine-year period from 1925 to 1934. By 1946, however, many of the nation's largest insurance companies were competing for the privilege of refinancing the building again.

Since December 29, 1927, the building has provided the club with its main quarters at a rental of one dollar a year under

a ninety-nine-year lease. These quarters cover about two thirds of the thirteenth floor and all of the fourteenth. Addition of business offices and the East Lounge, plus an annual contribution to real-estate taxes which the club agreed to at the time of the reorganization in 1935 have increased the annual cost for quarters to \$9,763, but this is scarcely twelve per cent of what it would normally cost the club to rent all the space it occupies. Out of the building deal the club got almost \$90,000 worth of free furnishings and equipment, plus a majority of the common stock of the separate corporation which operates the building. Ownership of the stock makes the National Press Club potentially one of the richest clubs in the world.

For all this the club as such invested not one cent. But scores of individual Press Club members gave their time, their energy, their ingenuity, their influence, and—where they had it, and once even where they didn't—their money.

Nothing could be more tangible than the building thus created and later "saved" for the Press Club. The structure rises fourteen stories above 14th and F streets Northwest, the busiest corner in Washington. It provides space for 1,001 offices, of which approximately two hundred and forty are occupied by news correspondents; for eleven shops, a basement cafeteria, and a theater seating 3,480 persons in addition to the club's quarters. Random statistics indicate the building's size: two miles of corridors, five miles of electrical wiring, a massive rectangular structure of terra cotta, brick, steel, and concrete extending two hundred and seventy feet on F Street and one hundred and fifty feet on 14th Street and covering nearly an acre of ground.

Architecturally the building is more functional than distinguished, with faintly Italianate overtones. One construction engineer referred to its styling as "early Balaban and Katz."

If the building is very real today, it seemed very unreal in the mid twenties when a club member named James William Bryan first made the obviously preposterous suggestion that the club could solve the housing problem it then faced by erecting a ten-million-dollar office building. For about six months in 1908 the infant Press Club had occupied a second-floor flat over an F

Street jewelry store; before the year ended it took over two floors at 15th and F streets over a drugstore; in 1914 it moved to the top floor of the Albee Building. Now in 1924 the Albee Building management was asking the club to move on because the space was desired for other tenants. The club membership was tired of moving and had become determined in the American tradition to own its own home. Henry L. Sweinhart, Washington correspondent of Havas, the French news agency, was elected president of the club that year on a “building program” platform. Nothing concrete had been done, however.

Bryan had been a newspaperman, printer, and publisher and a member of the club since coming to Washington in 1912. Most of all, however, he was a promoter. He had raised money to build Flora Macdonald College in Red Springs, North Carolina, the Woman’s National Foundation in Washington, the Croatan (hunting and shooting) Club in Virginia, and the lavish Congressional Country Club near Washington. At the moment he was looking for a new project to undertake.

There was then the juxtaposition of two facts: the club needed new quarters, and club member Bryan, the promoter, was looking for something new to promote. Bryan started on his own. He had begun work on a “Memorial to Motherhood,” but the women concerned with the project fought among themselves and motherhood had to go unmemorialized, at least insofar as this particular scheme was concerned. A planetarium as a memorial to Woodrow Wilson next engaged his attention, but personal difficulties among the sponsors again proved insuperable. Finally Bryan decided upon promoting the largest private office building in Washington, to be called the National Press Building and to be dedicated to the Press Club.

First Bryan turned loose a staff of eighteen gentlemen thoroughly experienced in the promotions of the twenties. They found that there was every reason to expect, Bryan says, that a building such as he envisioned could be rented. At that time the southeast corner of 14th and F streets on which the Press Building now stands was dominated by the old Ebbitt Hotel, a rococo, six-story relic of Civil War days. Part of the building blocked an alleyway. Next

to it on F Street was the tiny, two-and-one-half-story building in which Aaron Burr had his law office at the time he killed Alexander Hamilton in one of the most celebrated duels in all history. Next adjoining on F Street was the Hooe Building, a Victorian monstrosity with a cast-iron front.

Bryan discovered that the land was controlled by the Stormfeltz-Loveley Co. of Detroit, acting as trustees. Although the names of the partners in this real-estate firm were not invented by Dickens, they were indicative of their personalities. Harry A. Stormfeltz, Bryan recalls, was hard-boiled and irascible. Bryan dealt with Edward A. Loveley. They met in a room at the Commodore Hotel in New York. Loveley had broken a toe on the golf course and sat with the injured foot propped on a pillow. Bryan appeared with a bottle of scotch. The conversation went on for some time, interspersed with singing of "Annie Laurie" and other songs. Bryan learned that Loveley was at odds with his partner and was willing to grant an option on the land to forestall other plans under consideration by Stormfeltz.

"We had just worked down to about label level," Bryan recalls, "when Loveley turned to me and said, 'All right, I'll give you the option. Do you have a dollar?' I said I did, so we called for a public stenographer, and she typed up the agreement."

"Oh yes," Loveley added, "there is one more stipulation. You must promise that you'll never sing 'Annie Laurie' again in my presence."

Bryan, who loves to sing—particularly "Annie Laurie"—gulped. But a deal was a deal. "I promise," he said with resignation.

The dollar was, of course, merely a gesture, for the option required a payment of \$2,850,000 for the land itself in thirty days, with a thirty-day extension. It was obvious to Bryan that Loveley did not expect the terms of the option to be met. Loveley had reasons of his own for granting the option, but Bryan meant business.

Bryan went out and found builders interested in the proposition, who in turn found bankers willing to underwrite the sale of first and second mortgage bonds, totaling \$6,250,000. The builders agreed to provide \$450,000 on a third mortgage. He even started

negotiations with Famous Players-Lasky, the theater chain, for renting the proposed theater and obtained preliminary architect's sketches and estimates. The plan at that time was to erect an eleven-story building, for, according to a law designed to prevent private construction from dominating government buildings in Washington, that was about as high as a building ought to go.

It was August of 1925. Bryan came back from New York with his package of dreams and requested a meeting of the Press Club membership. Bryan had a proposed contract including twenty-two typewritten pages of requirements which the club would have to meet if the deal was to go through. A Club committee submitted the contract to Colonel William J. (Wild Bill) Donovan, then assistant to the United States Attorney General. Donovan said it was a good contract if the club could do the many things required of it. Most important of all, Bryan had obtained the support of John Hays Hammond, the famous mining engineer and then one of the richest men in the world, and John Joy Edson, chairman of the board of the Washington Loan and Trust Company.

Later in the month the membership meeting was held. Members' reactions ranged from open hostility to delighted incredulity. The club had to organize a separate corporation for the building, because clubs as such could not under District of Columbia laws hold real estate beyond their own needs plus \$25,000. The corporation would have to sell \$650,000 in preferred stock. It would have to obtain a theater lease of at least \$175,000 a year plus an agreement that the theater people would spend a minimum of \$200,000 in decorating the theater and would put up another \$200,000 as security for rent. It would further have to obtain leases for the rest of the building other than the stores.

Richard V. Oulahan, chief of the Washington bureau of the *New York Times*, led the opposition. Oulahan, now deceased, was one of the most respected correspondents in the capital. Bascom N. Timmons, representing a long string of Texas and other newspapers and who subsequently became a key figure in saving the building for the club, followed Oulahan's lead, and so did many others. In days to come the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Detroit News*,

the *Providence Journal*, and other major papers were to express their disapproval editorially. But a majority of the club members present favored the idea. They named a subcommittee composed of Messrs. Hammond, Edson, Sweinhart, and Bryan to carry on further negotiations.

Bryan went back to Loveley and demonstrated that the club really meant business. Harvey D. Jacob, a former special assistant to the Attorney General and an associate member of the club, was called upon for legal advice and recommended that something more substantial in the way of an option be obtained. Subsequently under date of September 4, 1925, upon assignment by Bryan of his personally held option on the land and for a consideration of \$50,000 payable to Stormfeltz and Loveley in three installments the option was taken over in the name of the club.

First there was the problem of raising the initial payment of \$12,500 on the option. The club did not have that kind of money. Bryan executed a demand note in that amount at the District National Bank, where he was told that the money could be borrowed if a dozen Press Club members acted as co-signers. These men, eventually totaling thirteen, have become known in the club annals as The Signers, honored in retrospect almost equally with the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Each obligated himself personally for \$1,050 of the note; some may have had that much in the bank, some might have been able to raise that much if sued, some, it can safely be presumed, were not within hailing distance of that much money.

The fact that two bank presidents were signers number twelve and thirteen and that a bank cashier was signer number eight in no way diminishes the personal risk these men were willing to undertake to make a dream come true, for such substantial signatures were obtained in a last-minute gesture of desperation. Harvey Jacob was the first of the co-signers. Next came Harold J. Pack, an attorney, now deceased; then Thomas R. Shipp, reporter and advertising man; Club President Sweinhart; Homer J. Dodge, then editor of the *Bankers' Information Service* and, as Bryan and many others recall, "a tower of strength" in making the

building a reality; Charles S. Hayden of the *Nashville Banner*; Frank P. Morgan, now deceased, Washington representative of August P. Belmont, the great financier and race-horse fancier; C. J. Gockeler, cashier of the bank which loaned the money; Edward E. Britton, of the *Raleigh News and Observer*; Frank B. Lord, former newspaperman and vice-chairman of the U.S. Shipping Board; Frank Morse, financier and broker; Edson and Robert Harper, president of the bank which made the loan.

It was a severe strain upon the banking laws for the president and cashier of the District National Bank, which made the loan, also to act as co-signers, but, the statute of limitations having run, the incident is worth mentioning as an illustration of the weird events which produced the Press Building and as an indication of the times. The club was having a terrible problem in finding all The Signers. Finally Harper, the bank president, was asked whether he and the cashier wouldn't help to fill out the list, and they dubiously consented. The note was dated September 3, 1925.

A month later another \$12,500 was due. John Hays Hammond came to the rescue. He put up the money himself. In the interim the Press Club had been negotiating with the Fox Film Corporation, a motion-picture-producing company shortly to go into the film-distributing business as the Fox Theatre Corporation. William Fox, president, wanted to make the theater in the Press Building the first of a new theater chain. Famous Players-Lasky (Paramount) had been in the deal first and out and possibly in again. A theater lease acceptable to the bankers was vital to the whole project, since the theater operators, whoever they were, would be the most important tenants of the building.

Edson, Sweinhart, Bryan, and Jacob went to New York on October 6 and conferred at the Hotel Belmont with Hammond and a vast assortment of lawyers, prospective architects, and theater representatives. The whole transaction was emerging from a dream world into reality, and the all-important Messrs. Hammond and Edson wanted a real showdown—could the project succeed or couldn't it? If it could, fine; if not they would withdraw their support and let it die. Famous Players had tentatively

agreed to make their lease subordinate to the mortgages as demanded by the bankers; now they opposed this notion. Fox, hammering on the back door, was then brought in, and a tentative lease was agreed to, including a \$500,000 advance on a fourth mortgage on the building. This was considered quite a victory for the Press Club, because it was thus relieved of much of the responsibility of selling the original \$650,000 issue of preferred stock, which was not going well. It was suggested that the final papers be signed the next day. Edson and Hammond would not agree. They would not go to bed, they said, until a tentative agreement was signed, and if it were not the deal was off.

Bryan, Sweinhart, Jacob, and a bankers' lawyer went to the Ambassador Hotel to the rooms of A. C. Blumenthal, Fox's business representative. The wrangling went on for hours. The room, according to the index of files in the possession of Harvey Jacob, was "flooded with scotch whisky and noisy people." Finally at three o'clock in the morning Jacob sat down before a portable typewriter and pecked out an agreement. Blumenthal signed it, and the word was triumphantly conveyed to Edson and Hammond at the Belmont. They insisted, however, that Fox also sign the agreement. Fox was at his home in New Jersey, but he came over to the Ambassador and attached his signature. Charlie Chaplin, the great comedian, was visiting Blumenthal at the time. His presence was demanded, interrupting a conversation with a beautiful young woman receiving instruction in the cinema art. Several of the principals wanted Chaplin's autograph; in addition he witnessed William Fox's signature on the tentative agreement. Chaplin signed in green ink almost illegibly.

The triumphant negotiators returned to Washington to explain to the Press Club what they had accomplished. The task had required the better part of two or three days. The sessions at the Belmont and the Ambassador were in fact only two of many such hectic meetings. The deal was off every evening and on again the next morning. Press Club members sat like spectators at a championship tennis match trying to follow the ball.

Through all this ulcer-raising agony the one tangible asset the Press Club had was the option on the land, which Bryan had first



obtained in his own name for one dollar and other considerations and later assigned to the club which had to raise \$50,000 to make the option good. It was in this period, Bryan recalls, that Blumenthal at one point offered Bryan personally \$500,000 for the option. Harvey Jacob remembers an occasion on which Blumenthal said, "Why don't you fellows get out of this; we'll give the club \$800,000 for your option." Blumenthal's own recollection is that he said at one point that certainly the option was worth half a million dollars and that the Fox interests subsequently raised the offer to about \$750,000. Whatever the precise situation may have been, it seems clear that the option was a negotiable asset worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Debate arose within the club as to whether the option shouldn't be sold so the club could purchase more modest quarters.

The Chaplin-witnessed agreement ran to only three pages, but the formal printed lease based upon that agreement totaled thirty-two book-size pages. After it was all printed Fox decided he wanted to make several changes. Sweinhart, Bryan, and Jacob went to the home of Saul Rogers, Fox's attorney, and walked into a psychological stunt worthy of Mark Twain. Rogers figured that the longer people were kept waiting the more amenable they would be to his proposals. He was operating a player piano when the Press Club representatives arrived. He told them to go on upstairs to his study, where they would find refreshments. As for Rogers, he kept on operating the piano in the living room for at least an hour while the committee pleasurably awaited his arrival in the study.

Rogers's psychology might have been effective, but he made one error. He had neglected to put Fox's copy of the lease out of sight. There in plain view on a desk in the study was Fox's signature on the lease he wanted to change. It was obvious that Fox was willing to accept the lease as printed, but had instructed Rogers to obtain the changes if possible. Finally after the player piano had tinkled mechanically through such classics of the times as "Brown Eyes, Why Are You Blue?" and "Oceana Roll" Rogers strode confidently up the stairs. Instantly he spotted the signed lease on his desk, snatched it up, and tossed it into a drawer,

while the Press Club delegates tactfully averted their gaze. The argument went on until five o'clock the next morning, but the Press Club representatives—well aware that they had the upper hand—would not budge. The lease was finally agreed to as printed.

Then came November 4, 1925, and the final \$25,000 was due on the option. Certain New York bankers involved in the mortgage financing had promised to advance that amount, but when it came due they were dissatisfied with the progress of negotiations and backed down. Panic spread among The Signers. The Fox interests were asked for a loan, and it was at this point that the offers for the option, ranging into six figures, were made. Finally Mr. Hammond was approached. He raised unshirted hell because the bankers' promises had not been obtained in writing. He declaimed at length on the naïveté of newspapermen involved in high finance. Then he advanced the \$25,000 himself, with Sweinhart, Jacob, and Bryan co-signing a note for that amount.

Just to make the situation more complicated and wearing there was a serious question about the title to the land because of that alleyway which for no explainable reason had been obliterated when the Ebbitt Hotel was built over it. The District of Columbia Commissioners held that if the Ebbitt was torn down the alley would have to be reopened. Citizens' associations in the District became aroused, but listened sympathetically to an impassioned speech by Bryan. It was obviously undesirable, to put it mildly, to run an alley through the middle of the proposed theater. Finally with the aid of Dan O'Connell, then on the city desk of the *Washington Times*, a compromise was reached whereby the alley would jog around the building if a back corner of the structure was lopped off to provide turn-around space for trucks.

To top it all off it was discovered in November that the building would cost more than anticipated in August, and the basic financing had to be renegotiated. It was finally agreed that the first and second mortgages would total \$6,600,000 instead of \$6,250,000, and that the building corporation would sell \$200,000 worth of preferred stock. There remained the third mortgage of \$450,000, held by the builders, and Fox loaned \$500,000 on a fourth mortgage. The deal was finally closed on December 22.

The first and second mortgage bonds went on the market, a very favorable one, in December and were subscribed three times over within ten days. Everyone concerned heaved a sigh of relief—but little did they know of the troubles which lay ahead.

Under the original plans for an eleven-story building the Press Club's quarters were to be located on the seventh floor. Demolition of the old buildings on the site began January 6, 1926, and after a few crises over the removal of tenants from the old buildings the club's building committee could watch the work progressing satisfactorily from temporary offices in the Westory Building, across F Street from the site.

In the meantime, however, club members had been engaged in a bit of genteel lobbying to obtain a special Act of Congress which would permit construction of a fourteen-story building. The idea was to give the club larger quarters than could have been provided on the seventh floor and also to increase the building's potential income by releasing the seventh-floor space for commercial rentals, as well as to provide additional rental space on the extra floors.

This stirred up another hornets' nest. Opponents of the scheme said the club was suffering delusions of grandeur—that it wanted to build "a skyscraper," and by Washington standards it is not altogether unreasonable to consider a fourteen-story building a skyscraper. Adverse editorials were written, and Senator William H. King of Utah even conducted a one-man filibuster against the bill. But Senator Royal S. Copeland of New York and Representative Thomas L. Blanton of Texas led the fight for the bill, pushed it through after a stiff battle, and the bill became law April 16, 1926. The club could go ahead with its "skyscraper." Now there was the little problem of raising the additional money needed for the extra stories.

At this point the building had four mortgages on it and consisted of a great hole in the earth in which the tides rose and fell daily. Washington is a sea-level town, and every time the tide rose in the Potomac the water would rise in the excavation and minor landslides would follow, slowing the excavators. Even today that tidewater is a problem; thirty to fifty gallons of water

are pumped from sump wells in the subbasement of the building every minute.

But arrangements had been made to have President Coolidge lay the cornerstone on April 8—and the President of the United States waits for neither time nor tide.

The ceremony was held on schedule, and it started inauspiciously. A Metropolitan Opera diva imported especially for the occasion started singing the "Star Spangled Banner," but the Marine Band played "America." After a dozen bars the band made a quick switch, however. This musical contretemps and the oratory which followed went out over a nationwide radio hookup. Newsreel and still cameramen duly recorded the great event. Every Washington correspondent and a visiting delegation of Latin-American journalists were in the crowd which packed 14th Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to F Street.

President Coolidge in a hard, high collar, cutaway coat, and striped pants scooped up mortar with a golden trowel and laid the cornerstone. There were certain peculiarities about this ceremony, however. The cornerstone was not the cornerstone which appears in the building today. Nor was it laid at the building line, for the simple reason that if it had been it would have fallen into eight feet of water—the tide was up at the moment. Instead it was placed on a temporary brick wall built on the sidewalk for the purposes of the ceremonial. Furthermore the heavy copper box containing the usual mementos which are placed inside cornerstones was kept in a safe for several months after the ceremony before it could be placed inside the real cornerstone. Nevertheless the club membership rejoiced at the event—the dream was becoming a reality.

The sale of preferred stock at one hundred dollars par value with seven per cent cumulative dividends got under way. Constantly as building progressed there was a need for more money. Then high-pressure salesmen went to work. Club members persuaded friends to invest. Newspapers bought \$121,000's worth, and individual newspapermen \$78,600. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon invested \$50,000; Mr. Hammond contributed \$52,700; Edson bought \$14,000's worth; and Otto Kahn, the New

York financier, \$25,000. The *Washington Evening Star* tossed \$25,000 into the kitty, the *Los Angeles Times* \$10,000, McGraw-Hill \$15,000, the *National Geographic* \$25,000. The great bulk of the total sale of \$1,232,700 in preferred stock, however, was made to the general public. It was the era when “everybody” played the market.

The builders meanwhile had finally solved the problem of the rising tides, and the first tenants, a law firm, moved into the building on August 25, 1927. Occupancy in those days was not an un-mixed blessing. The elevators were not yet operating, and some of the early newspaper occupants, such as the men working for McGraw-Hill and the *Baltimore Sun*, recall walking up twelve flights of stairs to their offices. Many of the early occupants did their own painting and installation of electrical fixtures and partitions, subtracting the expense from their rent payments. The building was still short of money.

This was such a chronic condition in those days that at one point, despite passage of the bill permitting a fourteen-story building, there was serious doubt that it would be anything more than an eleven-story building after all. Stock sales were not going well—and the builders, naturally enough, wanted cash on the line before adding the three extra stories including the Press Club quarters. Harvey Jacob and the long-suffering John Hays Hammond stepped into the breach. Jacob arranged loans totaling \$260,000 from two Washington banks, and Hammond personally loaned another \$50,000. These loans, fantastically negotiated with no more security than the fact that it was hoped that enough stock would be sold to cover them, assured completion of the building and the Press Club quarters as they stand today. Later the same year, because completion of the building had been delayed and anticipated income was not forthcoming, there was a slight matter of raising another \$300,000 to meet interest on mortgage bonds. Jacob went to work again—and borrowed the money from the builders themselves and from the Fox Theatre interests. The age of miracles—at least financial ones—was not past.

The Fox Theatre, now known as the Capitol, was opened on September 19, 1927, with the President, his Cabinet, the diplomatic corps, and a long list of other distinguished guests in at-

tendance. Louis Ludlow, of the Columbus (Ohio) *Dispatch*, then president of the Press Club and later to be a congressman, wrote a panegyric appropriate to that occasion. "If the scroll of time could be rolled backward three and one-half centuries and the boy Shakespeare could emerge from beneath the horizontal slab at Trinity Cathedral, whose inscription forever forbids meddling interference with his bones, how he would be thrilled if he could behold what we see tonight!" Ludlow wrote. And at year's end the club members marched in a procession bearing trophies of Presidential junkets from the old quarters in the Albee Building to the vastly larger and more elegant quarters in the Press Building.

For the first seven years the building operated in the red. In 1928, the first full year, it was necessary to refinance the four mortgages totaling \$7,550,000 into two mortgages totaling \$8,450,000 plus \$200,000 in unsecured notes. No dividends were paid on the preferred stock, nor have any been paid to this day. The building was 85.5 per cent rented in 1928, but only because of a windfall from the government. The Bureau of Internal Revenue needed space while its present Washington headquarters building was under construction, and it took over four hundred and twenty-five offices in the Press Building. Four stores and the cafeteria were vacant all year, and two other stores were not occupied until the latter part of 1928. The situation was somewhat better in 1929, but the Bureau of Internal Revenue moved out in mid 1930, and the arrival of the Federal Radio Commission by no means made up the loss. Preferred stockholders were screaming, and the bondholders began to evidence a vast disquiet over the situation.

Bascom Timmons was elected president of the Press Club in December of 1931, and it looked at the time as though he was about to head a club without a home. Why shouldn't the club pay rent? Why should it have received \$90,000 worth of free furnishings? Why should it stay in the building at all? It was true, of course, that the club had entered into the whole proposition with the highest of hopes and in the spirit of the boom times leading up to the debacle of late 1929. Virtually no one foresaw

the onset of the worst depression in American history. Even the stock-market crash was regarded as a temporary thing. Wasn't prosperity just around the corner?

But hard questions faced the club, and answers were necessary. In January of 1932 on the same night he was inaugurated as president of the club Timmons met in the Baltimore *Sun* office in the Press Building with J. Fred Essary of the *Sun*, who had just succeeded Hammond as president of the National Press Building Corporation, and with Jesse H. Jones, an old friend from Texas, whom President Hoover had brought to Washington to serve on the board of the newly created Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Essary showed Jones the balance sheet and told him it would be impossible to meet the interest on the second mortgage bonds in April. Jones ran a banker's eye over the situation, advised Timmons and Essary to hire a lawyer, and told them to be looking forward to the possibility of a receivership which would save the equity of every investor in the building.

The building went into receivership on October 17, 1932. Lawrence B. Campbell, general manager of the building, was appointed as receiver at his regular salary, which had already been cut from \$6,500 a year to \$5,000, in line with salary cuts which had reached even the lowliest porter. Under laws then existing the only solution seemed to be foreclosure of the mortgage. "Don't let them do that, Timmons," President Hoover advised. "First mortgage bondholders have been pretty ruthless. They have been foreclosing buildings right and left, getting property in many cases far in excess of the mortgage liability. This has spread misery all over the country."

Timmons and Essary went to work. There were endless conferences with bankers, "protective committees" of bondholders and representatives of the preferred stockholders. In addition to Timmons and Essary, Paul Wooton of McGraw-Hill, Carter Field of the New York *Herald Tribune*, Edgar Markham of the St. Paul *Dispatch*, O. M. Kile of the *Kile Syndicate*, Raymond P. Brandt of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, and George W. Stimpson, then editor of the *Pathfinder* threw themselves into the fray. Timmons, however, was the *enfant terrible* of this group, for he could lose

his temper more artistically than anyone else. Fists were waved under astonished bankers' noses, and on one occasion Timmons growled, "The bonded debt of this building is less than half of its value. We got as much usable money from the preferred stock purchasers as we did from the mortgage holders. The good faith of the Press Club is at stake."

"If under the circumstances you bondholders foreclose your mortgage I shall do my best to see that every newspaper tenant moves out of the building, and, furthermore, I shall personally chisel off the name National Press Building."

At the same time the newspapermen's lobby was functioning again. President Hoover agreed that a law permitting corporate reorganization rather than mortgage foreclosure was needed badly, but was able to get nothing more from Congress than a law providing this relief for railroads. By October of 1932 it was obvious that Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York was about to be elected President. Timmons and Eugene S. (Red) Leggett of the *Detroit Free Press* went to work on candidate Roosevelt aboard the campaign train. Roosevelt was sympathetic. Immediately after his election he was guest of honor at a Press Club dinner. Brandt sat on one side of him, Timmons on the other. Again the question of a new bankruptcy law was raised. Roosevelt said he would see what he could do.

Even so, despite a Congressional honeymoon of the early New Deal, it was not until 1934 that section 77-B, the corporate reorganization section, was adopted amending the bankruptcy laws. Club members obtained the House-Senate conference report, and lawyers started drawing the petition. Brandt, Stimpson, and Kirke L. Simpson of the Associated Press kept a death watch at the White House. The instant it was announced that President Roosevelt had signed 77-B into law word was flashed to Timmons. Fifteen minutes later Timmons was hammering on the door of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. It was by all odds the first petition under the famous 77-B clause which saved thousands of other buildings and corporations all over the country from ruin.

In point of time it took longer to reorganize the building than



it did to build it. Again the Press Club's special position came into question. What had the club contributed to the building? Always the answer was that it held the option for the land, negotiated by Jim Bryan and for which offers as high as \$800,000 had been made. Press Club members, most notably Bryan, had promoted the project. Finally a plan of reorganization was approved by the court. Campbell was named trustee on June 9, 1934, and the reorganization became effective January 1, 1935.

Under the reorganization plan holders of mortgage bonds and preferred stock waived nearly \$1,500,000 in interest and accumulated dividends and new mortgage bonds were issued at reduced rates of interest. First mortgage bondholders in exchange for waiving eight and one half months' interest amounting to \$239,755.10 received one share of preferred stock and one share of common stock in the Press Building Corporation for each one thousand dollars of mortgage bonds held. This reduced the status of the Press Club from sole holder of common stock to holder of approximately eighty-five per cent of the common stock. Preferred stock, with an original par value of one hundred dollars per share, seven per cent cumulative dividends, was reissued at two shares for each original share held, with dividends at two dollars and fifty cents per share per year, non-cumulative. Like most of the big buildings in the country the Press Building went through the wringer, and a lot of people lost money. Unlike many reorganizations, however, the Press Building's trial by fire did not enrich any sharpshooters. Campbell, with the aid of Walter M. Bastian, attorney for the receivers, and of other club members, handled the whole thing. Representative Adolph J. Sabath of Illinois, chairman of a select committee of the House of Representatives investigating real-estate bondholders' reorganizations, cited the Press Building as an outstanding example of a low-cost reorganization in which the equity of junior security holders was preserved.

Ever since the reorganization the building has made money in amounts ranging from \$120,000 to \$226,000 per year. It was 94.3 per cent rented in 1935, 99.08 per cent rented in 1936, 99.69 per cent rented in 1937, 99.36 per cent rented in 1938, 100 per cent rented in 1939, and 99.41 per cent rented in 1940. Ever since

then it has been 100 per cent rented, with a steadily growing waiting list, particularly on the part of present tenants who wish to expand.

With such a favorable picture it was small wonder that the building corporation had no difficulty in refinancing in 1946. The mortgage and note indebtedness of 1935 had been reduced by approximately \$2,300,000—or on an average of about \$200,000 a year. The bondholders were paid off in full, and the Equitable Life Assurance Society took over the mortgage at reduced interest. Additional funds needed to complete the deal were obtained from local banks on unsecured notes. The building had come full circle from wildcat scheme to solid and completely desirable investment.

From the beginning the Press Club's common stock, the only voting stock in the corporation, has been administered by a trusteeship. This was done on the insistence of the original bankers, for organizations such as clubs are frowned upon in banking circles when it comes to controlling a corporation. The trustees name the directors of the building corporation, who name the officers, who name the executive committee which controls building policy. Thus through the trustees the club controls the building today. Even at 1949 market values the club's common stock in the building corporation is worth in the neighborhood of \$360,000.

It is impossible in 1949 to predict the eventual situation, but, assuming continuance of a reasonable level of prosperity, there is every indication that by 1955 or 1956 the mortgage may be sufficiently reduced so that the interminably deferred dividends on the preferred stock may start to be paid. Eventually that stock can be called in at fifty dollars a share. After the preferred stock there is an obligation of \$300,000 for non-interest-bearing debentures which were issued to Bryan as the promoter of the building. And after that the club will own the building except for the 15 per cent of the common-stock shares issued in the reorganization. At the close of 1950 the trusteeship controlling the club's common stock will terminate. By then the club must decide whether to continue the trusteeship or take control of the stock itself.

Years ago, when the building was first getting under way, Press

Club members used to talk seriously of what the club would do with its profits from the building. A country club? Journalism scholarships? A fund to aid old and indigent newspapermen? The ideas considered in those days were no more fantastic than the circumstances which produced the building. And, like the seemingly fanciful dream which built the National Press Building, these dreams, too, may someday come true.

# Tradesmen's Entrance

BY HOMER JOSEPH DODGE

Homer Joseph Dodge—See Chapter 7.

The business press is far older than the general news press. News of battles and the rise and fall of kingdoms was intermittent; producers of goods and the merchants who distributed them were in need of a steadier stream of intelligence.

Herodotus communicated trade news, and so did other early travelers, but the founding of a business and industrial press in anything like the modern sense must be attributed to the House of Fugger. Johann Fugger, originally a weaver, died at Augsburg in 1409, but not until after he had founded a house of merchants the members of which became bankers to kings, and themselves princes. The vast success of the House of Fugger which flourished throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries has been ascribed to the trade news service which it established.

*Neues Zeitungen* (*News Tidings*) was the business letter which the Fuggers devised. It became a daily issue. First covering only the German provinces, it was extended until it had correspondents as distant as China in one direction and as the Spanish, English, and French colonies of America in the other. Foreign letters were translated into various languages and redistributed to the Fugger branches. In addition to news of production and of markets and news of political events as they did or might affect trade the *Neues Zeitungen* reported upon the activities of the Fuggers' competitors.

It was not until a century and more later that a comparable phenomenon took place in England. Sir Thomas Gresham had been born in Norfolk in 1519. He became a merchant at an early age and at Antwerp heard of the business methods of the Fuggers.

Antwerp perhaps even more than Venice was a clearing house of business news of the known world. Returning to England, he established a news service in candid imitation of the Fugger system. His widely distributed corps of correspondents was scattered over the chief trading places of Europe. By courier, by fast sailing ship he received the latest intelligence in the world of trade. Beside building his own tremendous fortune he made the fortunes of thousands of others. He was responsible for the building of the Royal Exchange, itself not only a bourse, but a news clearing house. Because of the knowledge he gained through his business news service, he was able to lay down Gresham's Law, which dictates that cheap money always drives sound money into hiding.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the establishment of regular trade journals such as Sell's magazine on *Husbandry and Trade* and *Lloyd's News*. By the mid nineteenth century every important British industry and trade had its journal. Today the textile industry alone has thirty-five trade publications, the engineering professions forty-seven, shipping sixteen, with other branches of trade and industry amply represented.

#### THE BUSINESS PRESS IN AMERICA

The American business press, as apart from other early American publications, began with the New York *Prices Current*, which, founded in 1795, continued until 1920. Prior periodicals carried trade and market news, as collectors' files attest, but the *Prices Current* must be regarded as the forerunner of a branch of newspaper publishing which has reached a higher development here today than in any other country. According to Julien Elfenbein, probably the foremost authority on the subject, more than thirty industrial and trade publications came into existence between 1795 and the Civil War, some of which survive. They were devoted to iron, steel, coach building, leather, and many other industries. One of the most notable of all American technical journals was the *Scientific American*, founded in 1845 by Rufus Porter, a shoemaker's apprentice and house painter who had a turn for invention. He invented a camera, a washing machine, a

corn sheller, and, if you please, a flying ship, among other things! Orson Desaix Munn bought the paper in 1846, and his grandson of the same name is the present publisher. The office of the *Scientific American* knew such visitors (usually seeking publicity) as Elias Howe, A. B. Wilson, Samuel F. B. Morse, Captain John Ericsson, Dr. R. J. Gatling, Thomas A. Edison, Samuel P. Langley, Peter Cooper Hewitt, and many another, men whose names are closely woven into the fabric of American industrial history.

There were less famous but doubtless equally valuable journals. There was the *Butcher's and Packer's Gazette*, founded in 1808. The *Railway Age* had its beginning in 1856, the *Prices Current Grain Reporter* in 1844, the *Iron Age* in 1855. After the Civil War there was a full flowering of the business press, and scores of papers were founded, some to become great, some to go under or merge with others. The late nineteenth century saw the birth of the important publishing firms which now share in the domination of the business-press field. It is a curious fact that several of the men destined to become leaders in business journalism came from far other walks. E. A. Simmons of Simmons-Boardman had been a counter jumper in a Brooklyn department store, James H. McGraw was a school teacher, and John A. Hill was a fireman on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. Soldiers, sailors, mechanics, college professors, grocery salesmen, and even poets and novelists have drifted into the trade-paper arena. On the other hand John Thompson, who founded *Thompson's Bank Note and Commercial Reporter* in 1836, also founded the Chase National Bank.

Business publications include a wide variety of papers. There is the general business paper such as the *Journal of Commerce*, founded in 1827, and a whole list of classified categories extending to the house organ. *Poor Richard's Almanack* was the first American house organ, issued by Benjamin Franklin to advertise his print shop. Others, such as *Dun's Review*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and *Collier's* have evolved into something else. When George P. Rowell first issued the *American Newspaper Directory* in 1869 he listed fifty-six publications under the headings Commerce, Finance, and Mechanics—in other words the business press of the

day. The first edition of N. W. Ayer & Son's *American Newspaper Annual*, published in 1880, listed six hundred and sixty-nine publications of the sort, but included some which Rowell had perhaps purposely omitted. For example, the Ayer listing has one hundred and ten fashion magazines alone and thirty-two devoted to music. The *Standard Rate and Data Service*, most comprehensive of all such lists, now gives approximately nineteen hundred publications of the industrial trade, technical, and specialized press.

Proud of the tradition of Samuel Harrison Smith, Murat Halstead, and Ben Perley Poore, the Washington correspondents of the turn of the century were somewhat inclined to think of the business press as the deck is inclined to think of the engine room, the city room of the business office. At the time of the founding of the National Press Club there were but three members of the Capitol press galleries who could be classed as belonging to the business press. But their status was not pure, because their daily papers also reported more general news. These three were Walter E. Clark of the *New York Commercial*, John Boyle of the *Wall Street Journal*, and H. Parker Willis of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, afterwards to be known as one of the authors of the Federal Reserve Act, Secretary of the first Federal Reserve Board, President of the Philippine National Bank, and occupant of the chair of banking at Columbia University. The first member of the galleries to appear as representative of an industrial paper alone was Charles E. Kern of the *Oil City Derrick*. By 1920 we find the galleries further enriched by the membership of Lynne M. Lamm of *Chicago Daily Hide and Leather*, A. E. Heiss of the *Traffic World*, and John C. Atchison of the *Daily News Record*.

World War I altered the standing of the business press at Washington and indeed throughout the country. It was the first war in which industry had been intensively organized, in which control had been imposed, in which there had been definition and allocation of essential materials, and in short in which full recognition was given to the importance of industrial mobilization. Bernard Baruch, as chairman of the War Industries Board, had established the "Acid to Zinc" committees; Herbert Hoover was

Food Administrator; a War Trade Board, a Capital Issues Committee, a War Finance Administration had been created. Foreign purchasing missions sat at Washington. A Robinson Crusoe appearing on the scene uninitiated as to background would have gained the impression that Washington was an industrial rather than a political and military capital; that if a war was being waged it was being waged with almost anything but traditional arms. And the Washington correspondents of the business press were the war correspondents of that era. Their numbers increased amazingly. Entire news bureaus were opened at the national capital almost overnight. The business press had come into its own!

It was Herbert Hoover who, as Secretary of Commerce, probably did more than any other government official to bring the business press into its fullest national usefulness aside from its peculiar sphere. An engineer, he understood the technical problems of industry and especially the relation of industry to the government. For nearly a decade Mr. Hoover presided at a monthly dinner attended by the Washington correspondents of the trade press and many of their editors and publishers who came to the capital for these occasions. Mr. Hoover realized that the business press was of the utmost value not only in carrying out broad industrial policies, but actually in initiating them.

Throughout the Presidencies of Mr. Harding, Mr. Coolidge, Mr. Hoover, and Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt frequent meetings took place in addition to regular press conferences between the correspondents and editors of the business press and the incumbent President. But that was by no means all. When important news issues arose special conferences were arranged with cabinet members and other high officials such as, for example, J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who was keenly interested in threats of sabotage to industry. Not seldom these conferences were sought by the government officials themselves.

The business press corps had become so large and influential during the preparedness period prior to Pearl Harbor that when that event occurred it was that part of the Fourth Estate which



was especially utilized by the government in the Herculean task of starting the engine of American industry. As the war progressed, such men as William S. Knudsen (later Lieutenant General) of the Office of Production Management, Donald Nelson of the War Production Board, Leon Henderson of the Office of Price Administration, General Brehon B. Somervell, head of the Army Services of Supply, their successors, and scores of others charged with the heavy burden of sustaining the war production and distribution in all phases leaned on the business press. Through that press more intimate messages (because more technical) could speedily be distributed throughout industrial America. In a word the technical press spoke the language as the daily press could not.

During the period of the rise of business press representation at Washington, correspondents who solely represented one or more publications in that field were not made eligible for membership in the Senate and House press galleries. Not a few had other newspaper connections which gained them admission, albeit such connections were of lesser import to them. This situation was so unsatisfactory that in the spring of 1941 the Congress responded to requests and established the periodical press gallery with office quarters, communication, and other facilities similar to those provided for members of the daily press. Gallery superintendents are provided for the Senate and House sides, and a standing committee of members of the gallery is in immediate control. As in the case of the other galleries, the supreme authorities are the Speaker of the House and the Committee on Rules of the Senate. When the periodical press gallery first opened it had but a score of active members; now there are sixty!

The trade paper of the newspaper profession itself is *Editor and Publisher*, established under that name in 1901. It had absorbed predecessor publications in the same field. The first was *The Journalist*, founded in 1884. *Newspaperdom*, established in 1892, and *The Fourth Estate* in 1894 later were merged. Also included is *Advertising*, founded in 1925. James Wright Brown is president of the Editor and Publisher Publishing Company, the head offices of which are in New York. James J. Butler has for years been Wash-

ington correspondent and, holding this unique position, probably is acquainted with more newspapermen than any other.

Many individual correspondents have worked tirelessly for the business press, but one individual long has stood out as its chief champion at Washington. Paul Wooton, Washington member of the editorial board of the Chilton Publications (and also correspondent of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*), a president of the National Press Club, helped in organizing the National Conference of Business Paper Editors and has served some years as president of that body. On a day in June 1943, Mr. Wooton called at the White House with some ninety members of the National Conference. Forestalling professional discussion, the President drew from his desk a gold watch and read to the assemblage the inscription upon it: "Presented to Paul Wooton by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on behalf of the Associated Business Papers in appreciation of his outstanding service to the business press in time of war. June 11, 1943."

#### THE WASHINGTON NEWSLETTERS

Ferdinand Lundberg, writing in the April 1940 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, observed: "A revolution has been quietly undermining the foundations of world journalism. The revolution is the work of the news letters, which some day may be regarded as the greatest new departure in the newspaper business since the invention of the telegraph, the linotype and the rotary press."

The first Washington newsletter as they are known today was established by Homer Joseph Dodge in 1913. Associated with him for a brief period were C. N. Odell, afterward managing editor of the Washington *Herald*, and Ernst Knorr. Later George Gall, Harvey Jester, Edward A. Gross, and Lynne M. Lamm replaced their interest under the continuing editorial direction of Mr. Dodge. The *Bankers' Information Service*, as the newsletter was called, began as an intermittent letter to banks and was almost wholly confined to news of the establishment of the new Federal Reserve System. It developed into a daily, carried by leased wire to New York and printed there and covered all news of the Fed-

eral Government of importance to banks, industrial corporations, commercial establishments, law firms, and a wide variety of other interests. The daily report consisted of some ten thousand words.

Although the staff had a permanent nucleus of full-time reporters, various other part-time men were employed. Reporters who were specialists in various fields contributed news of those fields. Also Richard Boeckel, head of the Capitol staff, had part-time assistants. Reporters who later became notable figures on the Washington newspaper scene served on the staff of the old *Bankers' Information Service* which incidentally had a twin issue under the name of the *Federal Trade Information Service*. Ralph A. Collins, George Durno, Willard M. Kiplinger, Avery Marks (a president of the National Press Club), Lynne M. Lamm, Irving D. Foos, Louis Rothschild, Robert G. Covell, and others were of the staff. J. Bond Smith covered tax matters.

As specialists, the members of the staff knew their subjects with an intimacy usually denied to correspondents of the metropolitan dailies and the press associations, with the result that the *Bankers' Information Service* frequently was first with Washington news. On some occasions and by special arrangement such papers as the *New York Times* or the old *New York World* might adorn its front pages with a story beginning, "*The Bankers' Information Service* tomorrow will say . . ." but as a rule the news was served exclusively to the subscribers.

Each subscriber to the service owned the privilege of asking for copies of bills in Congress, government publications, and answers to particular questions. Superficially this would appear unduly burdensome, but did not prove so in practice. While the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company or Henry Ford might ask anywhere from one to a dozen questions a day, J. P. Morgan would limit himself to one or two a year, so the more avid subscribers' special services were paid for in effect by the more abstemious or less curious. Some remarkable developments resulted from special inquiries. For example, Harvey Firestone the elder wanted to know full details of every country in the world where rubber could be grown, with details of monthly rainfall, soil surveys,

labor, tax and other laws, shipping facilities, access to the interior, forms of government, and everything else. The information was furnished in four days. When the report was in, an appointment was made for Mr. Firestone with Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce. As a result Mr. Hoover obtained an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars from Congress for an investigation covering the same ground. It took a year and added little to the original four-day report on the basis of which Mr. Firestone established his Liberia project and did some experimenting in Brazil.

All Washington newsletter editors have discovered that the letter thrives best when what Big Business regards as an opposition party is in power at Washington. While a Washington newsletter has a surprisingly wide variety of subscribers, the chief support arises from big business, and big business has been preponderantly Republican. It is felt that every possible source of Washington news must be drawn upon. Thus the *Bankers' Information Service*, starting in 1913, thrived throughout the ensuing years of Democratic rule, but declined when the Republicans took office, Big Business believing that with its friends in power the need to watch Washington had passed. The Service expired at almost the apex of its friends' prosperity in 1927!

There have been and still are highly specialized Washington newsletters of shorter or of longer life. The letters of Prentice-Hall, Standard Statistics, and Commerce Clearing House are devoted mainly to taxation, but touch, often at large, on other business subjects, usually with technical emphasis. The second Washington newsletter of wide interest was established by two Philadelphia newspapermen, P. H. Whaley and Henry M. Eaton, in 1918. Mr. Whaley was editor-in-chief and Mr. Eaton managing editor of the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger*. They established the Whaley-Eaton Service in the belief that the American people and especially the business community wanted something more than the daily press offered. World War I had produced a vast outpouring of official and other propaganda. Messrs. Whaley and Eaton believed they should report background news without

coloring together with a calculated estimate of what that news meant. It is of special interest to quote from Mr. Lundberg again where he says:

Business people still feel, as they report to the newsletter services, that all Washington Administrations exercise an indirect censorship through officials who discriminate socially and professionally against independent-minded journalists. Business people also believe that through advertising much private censorship is exercised over news, even though editorial policy is not dictated by advertisers. They think that the consciousness of a unity of interest with advertisers must affect the vision of a newspaper publisher. They feel that a newspaper with a large capital investment is not likely to take a pessimistic view of the business or political trend even when such a view is warranted by the facts.

The present success of the two outstanding Washington newsletters is strong and competent testimony to the soundness of Mr. Lundberg's observation. Newsletters carry no advertising. Even though their very titles embody the names of their editors they have a curious, half-shadowy anonymity—Oracular, Sibylline! Even though they contain no confidential information, they have the aura of doing so, an aura with which they are endowed almost wholly by their subscribers! The member of the Rotary Club in the Middle Western town and the Wall Street banker alike feel and want to feel that they have inside arcane information. And it is true that the Washington newsletter is free of all political, commercial, or any other pressure. The only weapon which could be used against it is wielded by the government—a threat of withdrawal of the mailing privilege. Should this weapon ever be used, too many people would want to know why.

The *Whaley-Eaton Letter*, now edited by the aging but still active P. H. Whaley and Harry Eaton, son of the late original partner, is issued in two parts. The American letter is a thoughtful, almost scholarly discussion of the American scene. A foreign letter was added in 1923. It emanates from London, but covers background news of importance from China to Peru. Politico-economic developments in Spain and Russia, South African gold production, the effects of censorship in India, and the Chinese

picture are covered with keen intelligence. The *Whaley-Eaton Foreign Letter* is written for American clients, but both letters have readers in many foreign countries.

#### THE KIPLINGER PUBLICATIONS

Willard Monroe Kiplinger knew Indiana's Abe Martin in his Ohio boyhood, and it scarcely can be questioned that he applied much of the wisdom he absorbed from that sage. For after what might be termed an apprenticeship with the Associated Press and the *Bankers' Information Service* he established the *Kiplinger Washington Letter* in 1923. It has become the Washington newsletter of widest circulation and probably chiefest influence. It has about a million readers.

The *Kiplinger Letter* differs from the *Whaley-Eaton* in many respects. While the *Whaley-Eaton Letter* develops the situation as to a relatively few subjects each week, the *Kiplinger Letter* strews scores of news items and comments upon them through its pages. While the *Whaley-Eaton Letter* wears a certain dignity of presentation, the *Kiplinger Letter* runs trippingly along. The *Whaley-Eaton Letter* might be said to be to the *Kiplinger Letter* what the *Atlantic Monthly* is to *Time* magazine, the Union League to the Rotary Club! In respect of each comparison there is no secret as to which represents the greater circulation.

As one of the more alert members of the Associated Press Washington staff Mr. Kiplinger learned Washington news and how to assay its value. As a reporter who sought contacts with every likely news source few channels escaped him. Further, he knew how to build around his desk a staff of specialists in various fields. The *Kiplinger Washington Letter* is assembled from the carefully prepared notes of the members of this staff. Frequent staff conferences are held through the week and then a final one at which the contents of the current letter are decided upon. Then Willard Kiplinger writes the letter. The style is indelibly his as the style of *Time* is Henry Luce's. But Mr. Kiplinger writes every word of his paper, as Mr. Luce does not.

Mr. Kiplinger now issues adjunctive letters, specializing within

his specialty. There is the *Kiplinger Tax Letter*, inaugurated in 1925; the *Kiplinger Agricultural Letter*, with a large audience among farm co-operatives, in 1929. Additional service, such as particular research, has not been held out to Kiplinger subscribers, but when inquiries are received full and careful replies are vouchsafed. Moreover Mr. Kiplinger draws from his clients suggestions of the utmost value as to what lines of investigation would prove fruitful of news of peculiar interest. The same relationship subsists between the *Whaley-Eaton Service* and its clients.

It has been fondly believed by some superficial observers that all one need do to start a Washington newsletter is to command a mimeograph. Careful analysis of this younger sister of the American press teaches that probably more anxious thought, more curious investigation, more earnest effort to arrive at essential truths go into the production of Washington newsletters than into the daily filings of newspaper and press-association correspondents!

Kiplinger, Whaley, and Eaton were all active newspapermen before they issued newsletters. Their enterprises have proved more than comfortably profitable, but the quickening redolence of printers' ink never could be completely fanned away from their nostrils. Inescapably drawn by this lure, Whaley-Eaton founded the *Sphere* in 1931 and Kiplinger *Kiplinger's Magazine* in 1946, both monthlies, both heart-warming jobs of typography and general format, with a satisfying high quality of material. The *Sphere* ceased publication in 1942, the war bringing paper and other shortages. *Kiplinger's Magazine* continues.

#### SPECIALIZED NEWSLETTERS

*Editorial Research Reports* was established in 1923 by Richard Boeckel, Burt P. Garnett, and Homer Joseph Dodge, with Cleveland Perkins subsequently joining. Mr. Garnett had been associated with Lowell Mellett, columnist and during World War II director of the Office of Government Reports, in the Scripps-Howard enterprises, and Mr. Perkins had served at many courts in

the American Diplomatic Corps. *Editorial Research Reports* maintains its original purpose of furnishing to editors comprehensive material on a given subject. Each week the subscribing editor receives a study of some subject uppermost in the news or likely soon to become so. Such a report is not an editorial; it is material on which editorials can be based.

At the conclusion of every session of Congress *Editorial Research Reports* issues records of the votes cast by every member on every measure of any importance, including votes on interior actions such as motions on amendments, appeals from rulings, and the like, always provided such votes have significance. In 1929 a daily report was added to the service. It is edited by Bertram Benedict.

*Congressional Quarterly* was started in the capital in 1945 with Henrietta and Nelson Poynter—he also owns the St. Petersburg (Florida) *Times*—as editors and publishers; and it is thriving as a link between the local newspaper and radio and Capitol Hill. It aims to give the facts to editorial writers and commentators and leaves the opinions to them.

David Lawrence's *United States News and World Report*, itself a general news magazine, has auxiliary specialized issues which come within the category of Washington letters, especially as to format. Apparently to meet the competition of the newsletters, a number of magazines, chiefly in the business field, print pages (somewhat in the nature of a newspaper's stop-press replate) in typewriter type, giving the impression of last-minute coverage. The Chamber of Commerce of the United States issues *Business Action*, a Washington newsletter, and several trade associations issue such sheets, usually weekly. There is a *Marshall Plan Letter*, and there have been somewhat ephemeral newsletters covering specific matters such as war surpluses. Roland Davies issues *Tele-communication Reports*, now covering television. A notable Washington newsletter issued for about a decade is that of Theodore Roosevelt Goldsmith. It concerns itself wholly with government securities. This is the type of letter which must be the work of an individual. Mr. Goldsmith is a recognized authority on his subject and the United States Treasury has consulted him on



policies. His letter reports on all fiscal developments directed by the federal government and the Federal Reserve System.

Mr. Lundberg sums up his estimation of this phenomenon of the revolution in journalism by saying:

"The newsletters have, in brief, made two important new discoveries. Significant news is not what is happening all over the world but what is happening within a few square city blocks of the world's surface. Vital news is not what has happened; such news is water over the dam, beyond control. Vital news is *what is going to happen!*"

#### THE LABOR PRESS

There is an important segment of the American press which cannot properly be grouped with the trade or business press, although specialized in purpose, nor can it be regarded as belonging to the general news press. It is the immensely self-conscious and the clamantly articulate labor press. It embraces some two hundred papers and magazines of national circulation and hundreds of local issues. It is conservatively estimated that the labor press now has a circulation of 16,000,000. The first outright labor paper was the *Journeyman's Mechanics' Advocate*, established at Philadelphia in 1827. The *Miners' Journal* soon followed. Samuel Gompers, for half a century president of the American Federation of Labor, founded and edited the *Cigar Makers' Official Journal* in 1876. *The Carpenter* has been published for seventy years.

It is a far cry from these pioneers to the hundreds of labor journals and what amounts to a labor press association, the Federated Press, as well as several syndicates. The earlier labor papers dealt almost wholly with the inner affairs of labor unions; today the labor press has a stentorian voice in national affairs. A recent survey of 16,075 editorials, articles, and items culled from one hundred labor press papers revealed that nearly four fifths of them dealt with social and political affairs, while 23 per cent were devoted to economic issues. Only about one fifth of what was printed had to do with internal union affairs.<sup>1</sup>

The editorial style of many labor papers is still sharply remi-

<sup>1</sup>*D-M Digest*, October 11, 1948.

niscent of the uninhibited American press of the first half century of the life of the Republic when, if an editor did not apply the bitterest epithets to his political opponents, it was only because they had escaped his memory. Any jaded reader of the conservative daily press would find stimulating reward from perusal of most labor papers.

To be sure, there is one branch of the labor press which maintains a different and much higher tone. The American Federation of Labor issues *Labor's Monthly Survey*, and the Congress of Industrial Organizations publishes the *Economic Outlook*. These are addressed to the leaders of the labor movement and members of their staffs and to no slight extent to the conventional newspaper press and to as much of the public as may be reached. These publications are handsome in format and sedately scholarly in expression. Needless to say, Labor's survey and Labor's economic outlook, while covering the same ground fundamentally as the surveys and economic outlooks of management, discover and descry far other things. It scarcely can be gainsaid that some indifferent judges might find that the surveys and economic outlooks of management publications could be regarded as equally myopic.

The Washington corps of correspondents includes not a few who devote their entire efforts to the labor press. Editors, reporters, caricaturists for labor magazines are active members of the National Press Club and belong to the press galleries of Senate and House. On important labor stories special labor reporters are sent to Washington, and each press association and some of the big dailies have men whose sole assignment is labor. In the summer of 1949 Labor Press Association came into being. This is a co-operative news-gathering agency owned by 185 labor weeklies with a combined claimed circulation of 12,000,000.

*Personnel*, organ of the American Management Association, in its January 1949 issue observes concerning the labor press:

The labor papers carry a great deal of factual material pertinent to craft and occupational interests of their readers. They tell the essential story of unionism. They provide a needed opportunity to the rank and file to blow off steam, throw pop bottles at the umpire, indulge in sincere criticism of union leadership as well as management. They

also perform a public service in bringing to light certain important information *which is seldom found in the daily press*, information in fact *which labor claims the daily press prefers to suppress*.

At least in one historical year the labor press proved the best gauge of American political opinion. In September 1947 the labor press stood two to one against President Truman. In April 1948 it was three to two against him. But in September 1948, but a few weeks before the epochal election, the labor press stood eleven to one in his favor!

## “Just One More, Please”

BY HOWARD L. KANY

Howard L. Kany is press radio representative for the Washington Bureau of AP. He was for a number of years newsphoto editor in the Washington, New York, and Chicago bureaus of AP. He is from Dayton, Ohio, and is a former staff member of the Washington *Daily News*.

AND WILLIAM C. BOURNE

William C. Bourne is chief Congressional correspondent for the International Information Service of the State Department. He was with OWI during the war and has worked on newspapers in his native Asheville, North Carolina, throughout the South and in New York.

The unexpected sun that shone down so brilliantly upon Harry S. Truman's Presidential inauguration in Washington's crowd-packed Capitol Plaza on January 20, 1949, despite the chill day bathed in its warming rays some three hundred and fifty news cameramen—the largest and most diversified crew of its kind ever assembled in the national capital up to that time.

When Chief Justice Fred Vinson prepared to administer the oath of office, swarms of men with Speed Graphics—and some with telescopic lenses—took careful aim from dozens of vantage points. Some used black-and-white film, others full color. Many were banked in tiers in the spindle-legged steel stand so thoughtfully erected by inaugural officials directly facing the President thirty to forty feet above the interested throng of spectators. Newsreel crews ground away at strategic spots along

with their sound specialists, shooting for motion picture screens. Others recorded for telecasts.

For the first time television cameras picked up inauguration scenes for spontaneous relay directly to living rooms in tens of thousands of American homes. The event marked significantly the latest great development in the field of visual journalism, but it also emphasized clearly through the deference shown the camera crews that news photography had come of age.

With Washington's propulsion into top spot in national and international affairs, visual journalism has kept pace and a veritable stream of news pictures and of spot news and interpretive editorial cartoons flows outward from the national capital daily by plane, rail, wire, courier, and wireless to a news-hungry world. No event in the area worthy of the label "news" goes unaccompanied by the click of many shutters, the blinding flash of photographers' bulbs, and the scratch of artists' pens across drawing boards.

Since Johann Gutenberg invented the fundamentals of modern letterpress printing, journalism has striven unceasingly to improve the graphic arts and thus to bolster its work with illustration.

As the newspaper fraternity well knows, in the days before modern photography came into its own visual journalism placed its entire dependence in the line cut on a wood block. On May 9, 1754, Benjamin Franklin in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* published what is said to be the first political-news cartoon ever to appear in the press of this country. An early reproduction hangs today on a corridor wall next to the National Press Club library. It depicts a snake divided off into eight sections, the head representing New England and the other seven parts the remaining colonies. "Join or Die," the caption admonishes.

Illustration of the news progressed little beyond the line cut until daguerreotype equipment, followed closely by the camera, was developed in the period just prior to and during the War Between the States.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and perhaps it was the pressure of the devastating drama of the war that touched off the next great forward stride in the field and gave to Mathew B.

Brady his strong claim to the title of father of news photography.

Brady, a Washington photographer, first realized the intense value of photographed battle action to the news. The heavy-bearded apostle of tripod and lens packed up his crude and unwieldy apparatus when the war broke out and set out in the wake of the Union armies to photograph subjects of such spirit, action, and personality that their extraordinary historic worth now far exceeds their great material value.

In 1874 the federal government bought up Brady's collection of seventy-two hundred negatives for the paltry sum of \$2,840. Apparently realizing its niggardliness, Congress later voted him another \$25,000. But even as far back as President Garfield's administration the negatives were valued at \$150,000. They are now so prized that along with other almost priceless American historic records they repose in the vaults of the National Archives.

Ensuing years saw illustration in the press inch its way forward, but more in the advertising than in the news and editorial columns. It was not until 1880 that half tones made from photographs began to appear alongside the printed word in the field of news and editorial comment. Since then the art has taken seven-league strides, with the greatest and most lasting coming in the period from World War I to World War II.

The birth of visual journalism as it is known today was preceded by excruciating labor pains, no small part of which was reflected in the treatment accorded the photographers themselves. While reporters, columnists, and editorial writers were accepted generally in all walks of public and private life—some of them even making the social "blue book"—photographers were decidedly *persona non grata*.

That the situation has changed so sharply is due without doubt as much to the courage, resourcefulness, and persistence of the photographer himself as to the ingenuity of American inventors who produced better equipment for the job he had at hand.

Until 1930 almost all news photographers operated out of doors without flash equipment and indoors by time exposure or with the aid of a villainous type of explosive flash powder which had to be

poured into a V-shaped metal trough mounted on a vertical handle.

There followed a lightninglike flash accompanied by a startling muted sound that can be described only as a tremendous "poof" or "whoosh." A great cloud of gray-white smoke rolled through the room, into the corridors, and even upstairs, leaving in its wake such acrid and pungent effects as to bring strong sneezes and watery eyes to the hardest subjects.

With advent of flash bulbs and shutter-synchronizing equipment this aspect of news photography changed, but the subjects of pictorial effort could not forget the startling experience and they wanted no further part of visual journalism's battle for recognition. The artist with his Speed Graphic still was *persona non grata*.

Until World War I Washington photographic coverage was on a hit-or-miss basis. Free-lance cameramen handled occasional assignments for the big still-picture and newsreel companies, or for the most important events the companies might send down from New York a staff crew on special assignment. Then, with the war, training camps were established near by at Camp Meade, Maryland, and Camp Humphries, Virginia, for the doughboys. Home-town papers were crying for more and more pictures of them. Foreign missions and delegations began to pile into the capital, always making news. So full-time professional cameramen streamed in for "the duration"—and never got away.

Washington blossomed from a whistle stop to a big-city news center, and camera coverage was a necessity. It was in this period that photographers began to replace pen-and-ink artists as the chief producers of newspaper illustrations, and the subjects themselves—mostly national and international figures on the capital scene—were becoming educated to the full value of a good news picture.

Some prominent figures continued to balk at having a lens pointed their way. Washington had a patriotic parade in September 1918. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker was on the reviewing stand with many other notables. A platoon of photographers crept up to photograph General John J. Pershing. Baker remon-

strated with considerable vigor, and they "shot" him in the act. The *Washington Times* printed the picture and in its columns commented, "Photographers fought a hard war yesterday. Though provided with passes, as usual, they were beneath the notice of Washington police. Nobody was friendly, everybody showed themselves otherwise, and the poor picture takers were chased helter-skelter about the court of honor."

During President Wilson's second term a band of photographers had to stand vigil across the street from the White House near the old State, War, and Navy Building, which was as close as they were permitted to loiter. They had no passes or pressroom and could only enter the White House grounds on special request. They had to snap their pictures on the run as notables left the White House gates. This work was tiring and the rewards skimpy for men who lugged around heavy box-type cameras and movie equipment on unwieldy tripods.

Among the dozen cameramen who stood these White House dogwatches were Harry Van Tine of International News Photos, J. C. Brown of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer News of the Day, and George Dorsey of Warner-Pathe News. All three are still on the job.

The photographers had wanted for some time to snap pictures of President Wilson playing golf, but Dick Jervis, the White House Secret Service chief, wouldn't consent. One day he called them in, told them there was a shack full of knotholes near one of the greens where the President would be putting and they could sight their lenses through these knotholes. He took them out to the shack, and they crowded in. Becoming accustomed to the dark interior, they soon saw there were no knotholes. They tried the door. It had been padlocked on the outside. President Wilson played his game undisturbed.

For five months during the fall and winter of 1919-20 the photographers tried to get permission to photograph Wilson, who was ill at the White House. Then in the spring they learned he was permitted to sun himself on the south lawn. Van Tine and several colleagues hid with their cameras in a load of hay ordered for the White House sheep. Secret Service men noticed a sus-



picious bulge when the vehicle reached the White House gate. The photographers were unloaded outside, and the hay went on in to the sheep.

On February 17, 1921, at the Capitol, House Speaker Frederick H. Gillett issued a list of rules governing entrance to the House Office Building. Rule two stated, "Dogs are not allowed to be brought into the House Office Building." Rule three said, "Permission to photographers must be in writing by the superintendent of the House Office Building." Said the *Washington Herald* next day, "Adding insult to injury, the cameramen feel it would have been more tactful to have inserted at least a paragraph between the order forbidding them the building, and a similar decree excluding dogs."

These and many similar instances led two dozen news photographers on June 13, 1921, to get together and organize the White House News Photographers' Association, with Arthur Leonard as the first president. George Christian, secretary to President Harding, issued the members identification cards granting them admission to all public events and some private ones at which the President appeared. The association did not limit membership to photographers covering the White House. It was, and still is, open to all full-time professional news photographers in Washington.

The early twenties brought a turn for the better in photographers' working conditions. The White House opened a press-room and began to issue a daily calendar of the President's appointments, permitting the cameramen to plan when they should be there and when they could shoot pictures elsewhere. A former newspaperman and a member of the National Press Club, Harding posed for news pictures several times a week. He had a good general knowledge of photography, was informal and considerate, and the news cameramen regarded him as their friend.

"It used to be difficult," wrote George Dacy in the *Dearborn Independent* of June 3, 1922, in noting the capital's change of attitude toward news cameramen, "to obtain photos of Government officials and members of Congress. Many leaders were

prejudiced against having their pictures published. The present Administration has softened such antipathies. Notables who once frowned whenever they saw a news photographer's camera now smile and pose."

But cameramen still had barriers to cross. Dacy said in his opinion President Harding did not like to have his picture taken "any better than do you or I," but that he submitted to it because newspaper and magazine readers the world over wanted to see photographs of the President, and he considered it his duty to appear before the camera at frequent intervals.

Public figures began entertaining cameramen. Senator Thomas Coleman DuPont of Delaware took photographers' association members for a fishing and swimming expedition down the Potomac. President Coolidge invited White House cameramen for a cruise on his yacht, the *Mayflower*. The photographers in turn started a series of annual dinners in honor of the President and other high federal officials. The first such banquet on March 1, 1923, at the Arlington Hotel, cost \$2.50 a plate. Tickets for the 1949 dinner held on March 19 were \$12.00.

At the 1925 dinner Calvin Coolidge was chief honor guest. The next year he couldn't attend, so a delegation which included the 1949 association president, George Dorsey, sliced off the top deck of a cake—made in the form of a photo album—and delivered it to the President.

On August 8, 1924, photographers obtained a rare picture of the usually stern-faced Coolidge. He was pictured laughing at a not-so-spectacular play during a baseball game between photographers and writers. The writers won sixteen to eleven, and cameramen said it was only because the scribes had the help of government statisticians.

But photographers still were encountering difficulties. During an Armistice Day celebration in 1923 at the S Street home of former President Wilson close-ups were barred on Wilson's orders. They were implemented by a roped enclosure, and this restriction led to some rough play. A newsreel made that day showed a policeman dragging a cameraman along the street.

"The truth is that Washington has been notorious as a place for

news photographers to stay away from," one newspaper editorial stated. "Many times, news photographers have returned to their home cities in a generally bewildered condition and with cameras and plates broken as a result of manhandling by capital policemen. Setting up a camera for pictures that nobody objects to in other cities—and which statesmen do not object to when they are away from the capital—appears to be a heinous offense in Washington."

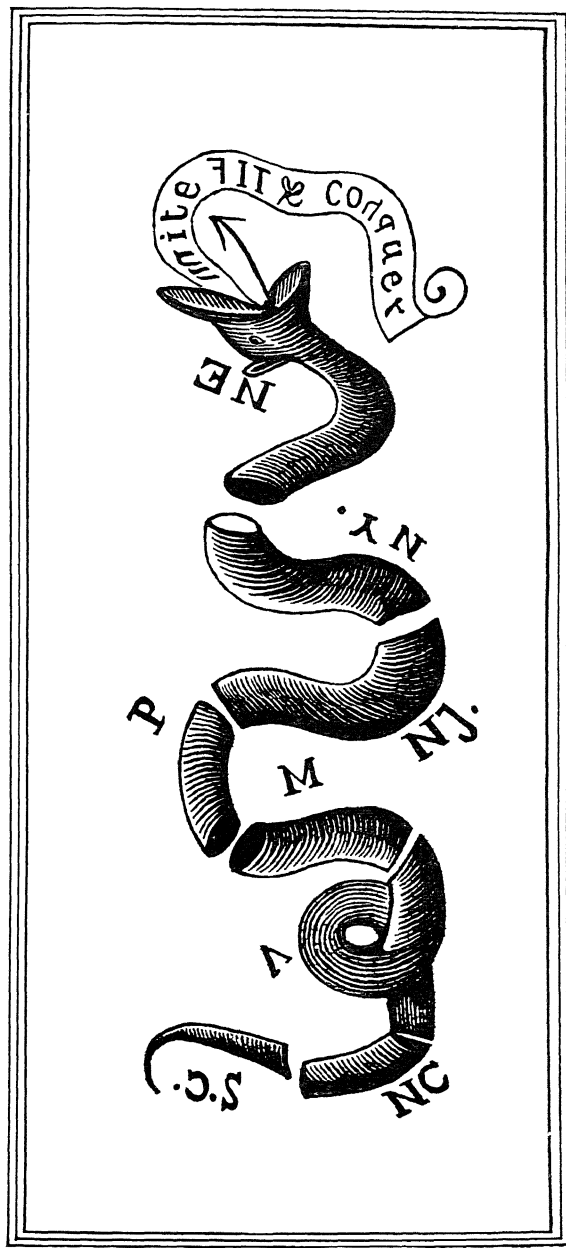
This incident led to the issuance of police passes to photographers, credentials which would allow properly accredited cameramen to pass through all police lines.

At the court-martial of Brigadier General Billy Mitchell in 1925 still and movie cameramen squeezed into every foot of space behind members of the court. The clicking and humming of their machines were the only audible sounds above the reading of court orders as the trial began.

When Col. Charles A. Lindbergh returned to Washington from his celebrated solo flight to Paris a motion-picture sound truck for the first time was included in the working paraphernalia of the cameraman. One newsreel firm rushed negatives to New York City by special train, processing film en route as the train set a new record of one hundred ninety-one minutes for the two-hundred-twenty-six-mile run.

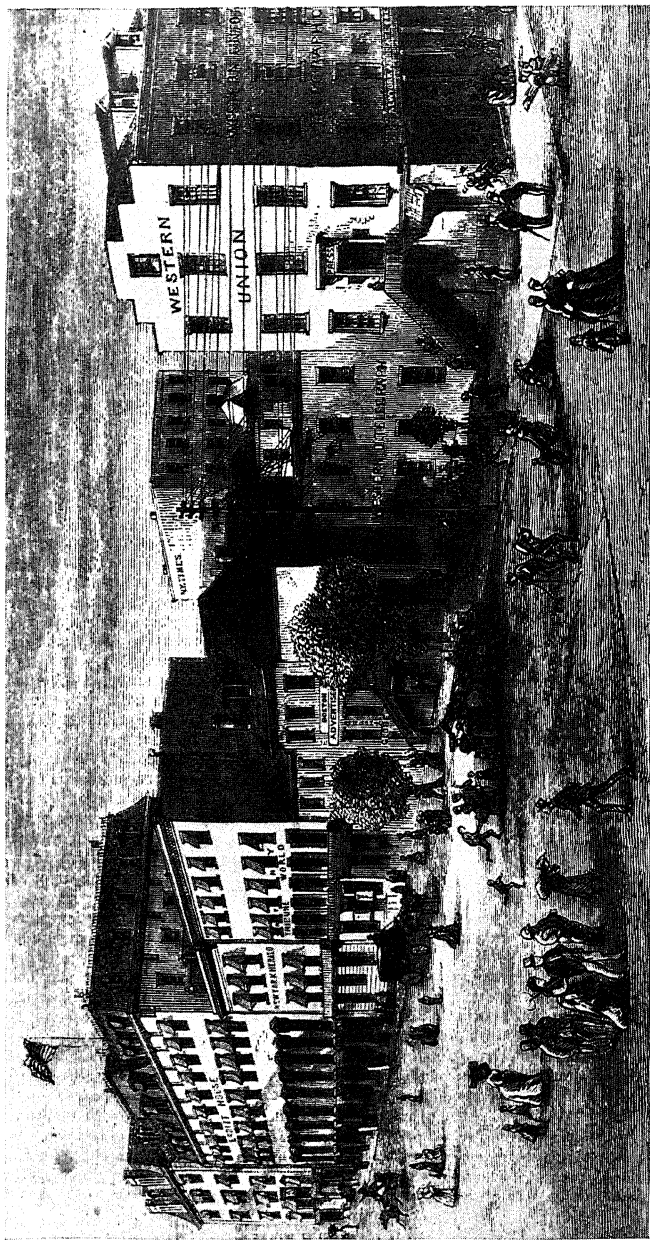
With the consent of her parents, Paulina Longworth, daughter of Speaker Nicholas Longworth and the former Alice Roosevelt, in 1926 posed for pictures at the age of six weeks. One photographer reported that the five-minute date in a nurse's arms drew more photographers "than an eclipse of the sun."

So did a White House call that year by Andrew J. Volstead, father of the Prohibition Amendment. Volstead refused to pose, then began walking away briskly. Cameramen followed. Volstead broke into a run. A witness said when Volstead reached the front lawn of the White House his long legs were working like windmills and his coattails were floating out in his wake. Twenty feet behind, like a pack of hunting dogs, came the photographers. The author of the Prohibition Act was well down Pennsylvania Avenue before he stopped running. But the photographers already had what they wanted.



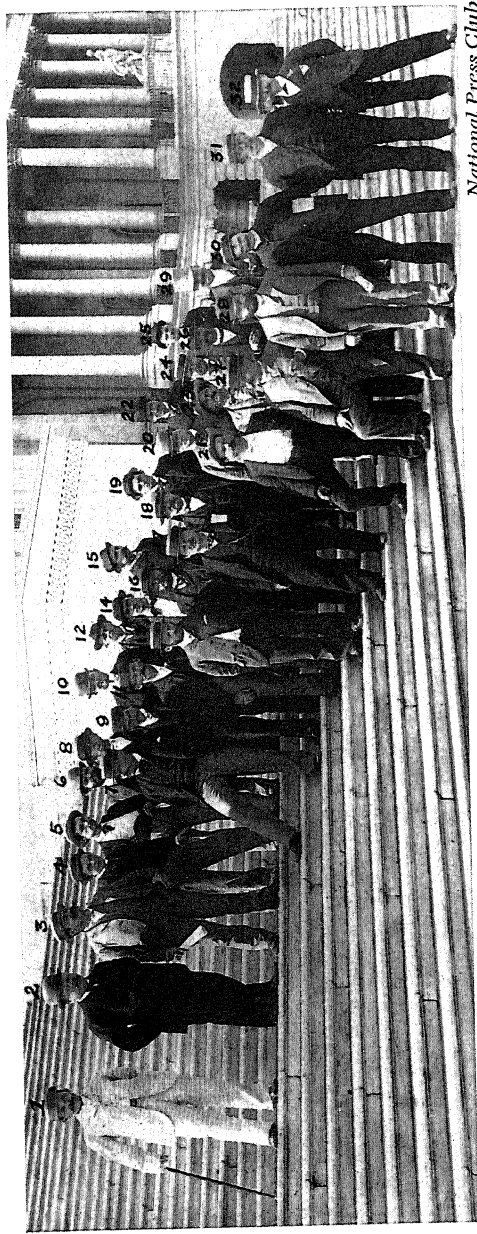
*National Press Club*

This is a reproduction of what is said to be the first cartoon published in an American newspaper. It appeared in Benjamin Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754. Franklin named it "Join or Die." It depicted a snake cut into eight parts, representing New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and mouthing the admonition: "Unite and conquer." Other colonial papers copied the sketch, and so was born the idea of the newspaper editorial cartoon.



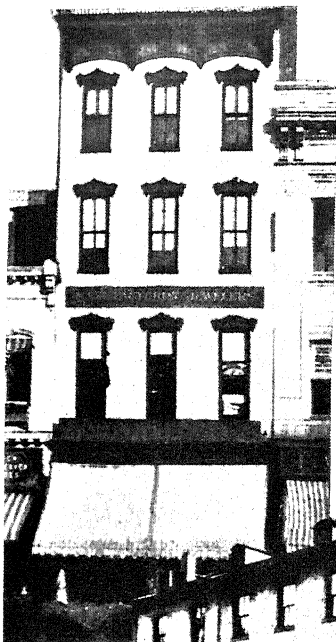
Washington's traditional "newspaper row," as in this drawing of the 1860s, extended along 14th Street, N. W., from Pennsylvania Avenue (foreground) to F Street. For more than a century newspaper, press service, and later radio offices have centered in this downtown area. Present National Press Building is on site once occupied largely by the old Ebbitt House.

*National Press Club*



National Press Club

Majority of Washington congressional correspondents of early 1890s are included in this photo on Capitol steps. They were: 1. Louis Lang, *New York Press*; 2. E. J. Gibson, *Philadelphia Press*; 3. George Apperson, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*; 4. Henry C. Kemp, *Baltimore Star*; 5. Thomas Noyes, *Washington Star*; 6. Charles H. Gray, *St. Paul Pioneer-Press*; 7. Howard Thompson, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*; 8. W. W. Burhans, *United Press*; 9. Cliff Rose, *Birmingham Age-Herald*; 10. Frank Morgan, *Brooklyn Citizen*; 11. Colonel Hinman, *Cleveland Citizen*; 12. O. O. Stealey, *Louisville Courier Journal*; 13. A. Maurice Low, *Boston Globe*; 14. George H. Harries, *Washington Star*; 15. Charles A. Hamilton, *Brooklyn Times*; 16. F. A. C. Handy, *Chicago Times*; 17. Fergus Ferris, *Baltimore Herald*; 18. John S. Shriver, *New York Mail and Express*; 19. E. W. Barrett, *Atlanta Constitution*; 20. Richard V. Oulahan, *United Press*; 21. Thomas Kirby, *New York Journal of Commerce*; 22. Perry S. Heuth, *Indianapolis Journal*; 23. Charles J. Hayes, *Associated Press*; 24. William R. Bell, *Pittsburgh Leader*; 25. Fletcher Hodges, *Richmond State*; 26. Edmund Hudson, *Boston Herald*; 27. E. M. Hood, *Associated Press*; 28. F. A. Dupuy, *New York Times*; 29. Harvey Fleming, *Kansas City Star*; 30. Louis Carthe, *Baltimore American*; 31. S. E. (Sam) Johnson, *Cincinnati Enquirer*; 32. Cliff Warden, Doorkeeper. Senate Press Club.



These were homes of National Press Club before world's largest press club moved into present quarters in National Press Building, December 27, 1927. The club had 200 members when it established its first rooms (top) in building at 1205 F Street N. W., May 2, 1908. On March 20, 1909, the club moved to quarters above a store at 15th and F streets (center). And on March 20, 1914, the club took over its third home atop the Riggs Building (now Albee Building, bottom) at 15th and G streets.

*National Press Club*





*Harris & Ewing*

The National Press Building at 14th (right) and F streets, N. W., houses headquarters for many Washington news bureaus, newspaper and magazine offices. The National Press Club occupies the top two of the fourteen floors. The club moved into its new quarters December 27, 1927.





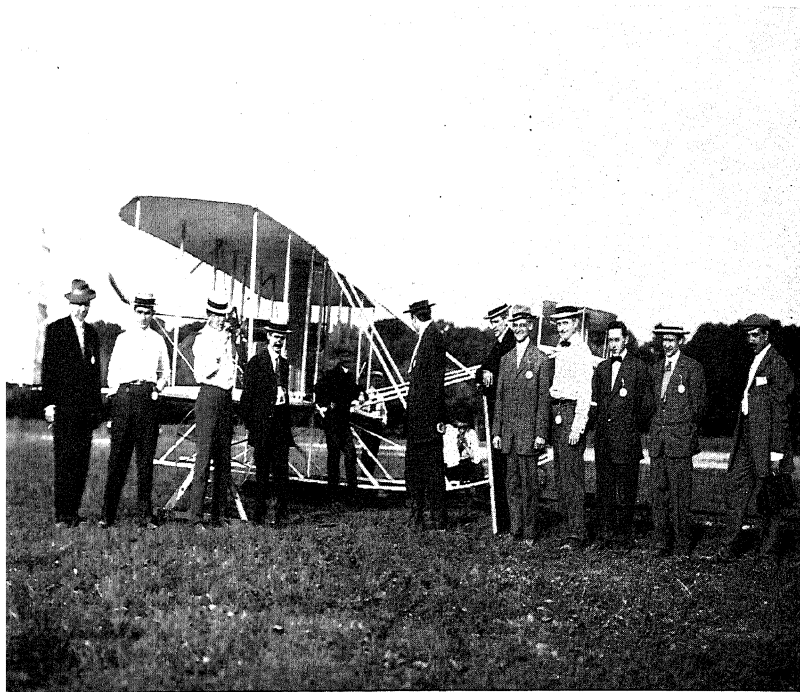
*J. C. Handy Studio*

Pioneer news photographer Matthew B. Brady (right) watches associate make this 1864 exposure of balding Brig. Gen. R. B. Potter and his staff before Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia. In three "Brady collections" in Washington are thousands of Civil War scenes and portraits by Brady and contemporaries, who obtained remarkable results with primitive camera equipment. Close-cropped, this picture once was credited to Brady himself, but complete original print revealed he leaned this one out.

In World War II, one of the best-known overseas correspondents was the late Ernie Pyle, of Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance, who here talks on Okinawa with Marine PFC J. P. Murray (right) of Winthrop, Massachusetts. A few days later Pyle was killed by Jap machine-gun fire. A Pulitzer prize was among his many awards. From 1941 to 1945, 1326 Americans served as war correspondents; forty-five were killed.

*Wide World Photos, Inc.*



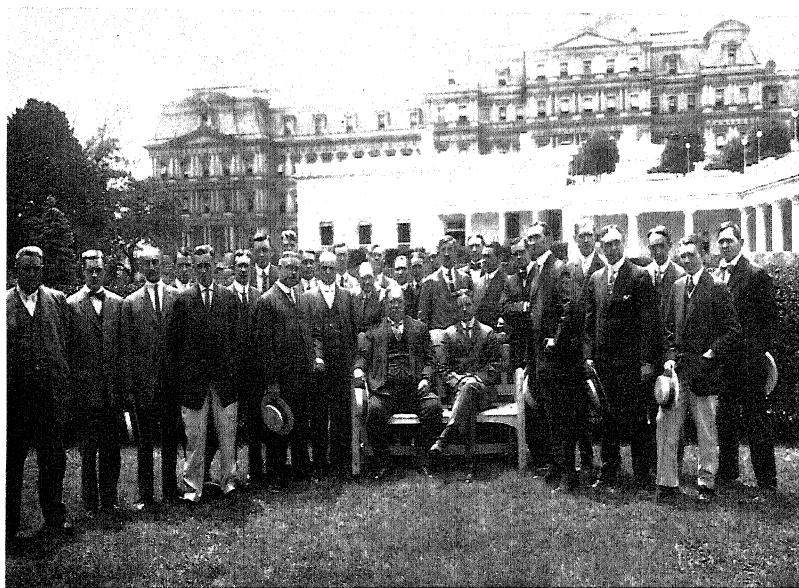


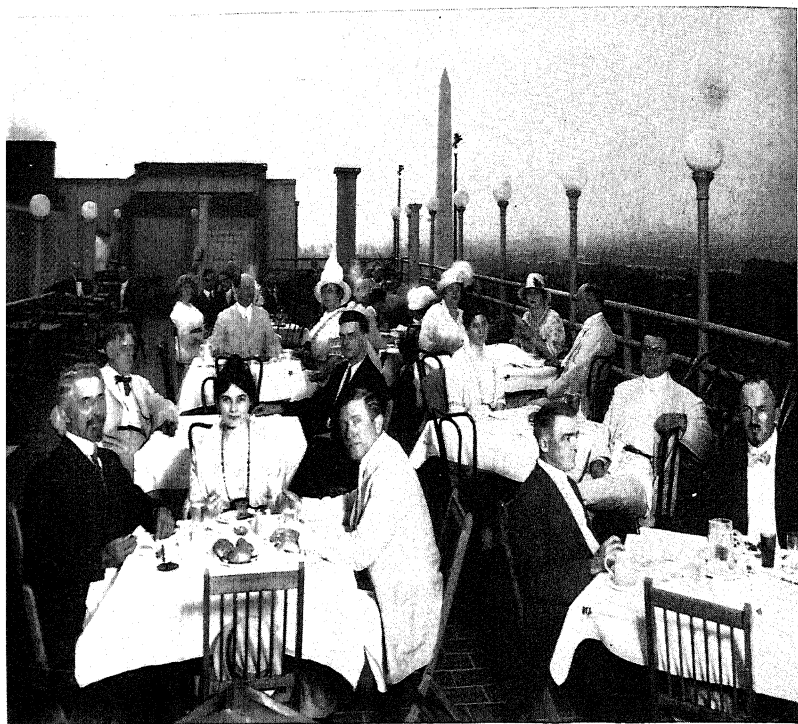
*Paul Weir*

Washington newsmen (with badges) cover historic trial flight of Wright airplane just before its acceptance August 2, 1909, as first United States heavier-than-air craft. Federal government paid \$30,000 for the four-cylinder single-engine twenty-five-horsepower machine after Orville Wright flew it at forty miles an hour for a few miles in Virginia from Fort Myer to Shooter Hill. From left to right are: Philip H. Patchin, *New York Sun*; Paul Weir, *Associated Press*; John Walter Mitchell, *Washington Star*; Edward B. Clark, *Chicago Evening Post*; Orville Wright; Wilbur Wright; Twouhy of the *Washington Post*; Charles E. Taylor, the Wrights' mechanic; unidentified man; A. P. Arnold, *United Press*; William A. Crawford, *New York Times*; Sergeant of the *Washington Herald*; Ralph A. (Spike) Collins, *Washington Times*; Carl H. Claudy, Sr., *New York Herald* writer and photographer.

President William Howard Taft sat on White House bench in summer of 1911 with Washington correspondents grouped around him in this precursor of the presidential news conference. Beside him (right) is his secretary, Charles D. Hilles. The others are, left to right, William W. Price, *Washington Star*, reputed to have been first full-time reporter at White House; Guy Mason, *New York World*, now District Commissioner, Washington, D. C.; Gus J. Karger, Cincinnati *Times-Star*; Robert D. Heintz, *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*; Robert Dougan, Associated Press; William E. Brigham, *Boston Transcript*; Louis Ludlow, *Indianapolis Star*, later for many years congressman from Indiana; Dudley Harmon, *New York Sun*; George Griswold Hill, *New York Tribune*; Paul Weir, Associated Press and Reuters; Major Alfred J. Stofer, *Birmingham News*; William L. Stoddard, *Boston Transcript*; William Hoster, Hearst Publications; William Wolfe Smith, *Buffalo News*; Frank R. Kent, *Baltimore Sun*; next man not identified; Henry C. Biggs, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*; John Lorange, *Boston Advertiser*; Orville H. Stewart, *Baltimore Evening Sun*; John Keim Stauffer, *New York Evening Mail*; Albert W. Fox, *New York Herald*; Oswald F. Schuette, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*; J. Fred Essary, *Baltimore News*; Arthur C. Johnson, *Denver Rocky Mountain News*; Rudolph Forster, White House Executive Clerk; Sevellon Brown, *Providence Journal*; and Charles R. Michael, *Philadelphia Ledger*.

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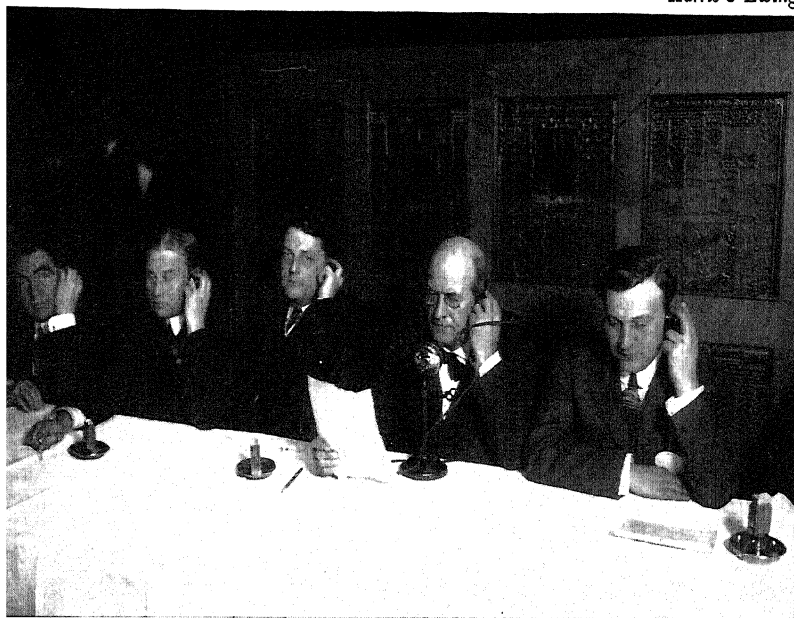


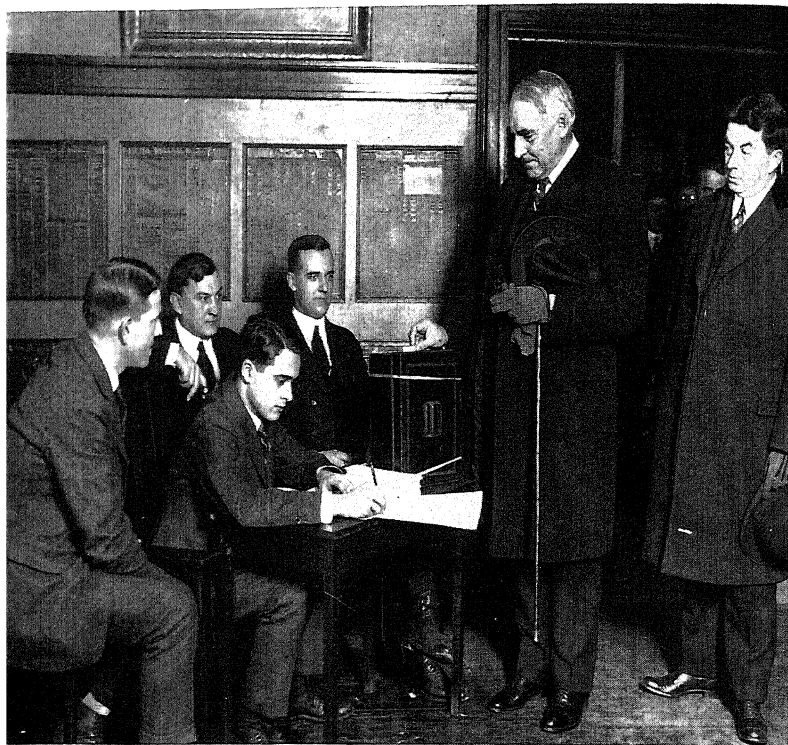
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National Press Club members and guests enjoy a summer evening in 1914 on club roof atop Albee Building. The Washington Monument is in background. Among those at tables, from left to right, are: Left row, front to rear: First table, Mrs. Fred Britton; Representative Fred Britton (R-Ill.); second table, L. White Busbey, secretary to Speaker Joseph G. Cannon; Franklin L. Fisher, *National Geographic Magazine*; third table, Russell M. MacLennan, *New York Evening Telegram*; Mrs. MacLennan; and just behind and to left of MacLennan, Theodore Tiller, *New York Times*, and Marvin McIntire, *Washington Times* and later a secretary to President Franklin D. Roosevelt; right row of tables: second table, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Showalter, *National Geographic Magazine*; Mrs. Edwin Hood; Miss Gretchen Hood; Edwin Hood, Associated Press.

At National Press Club, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan makes one of first transcontinental telephone calls. On April 3, 1915, he speaks to San Francisco on occasion of opening of press quarters at Panama-Pacific Exposition. From left to right are: Fred A. Emery, Associated Press; Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Byron R. Newton; Frank B. Lord, press club president; Bryan; and Theodore H. Tiller, *New York Times* and Southern newspapers. The coasts were first linked by public telephone January 26, 1915.

*Harris & Ewing*



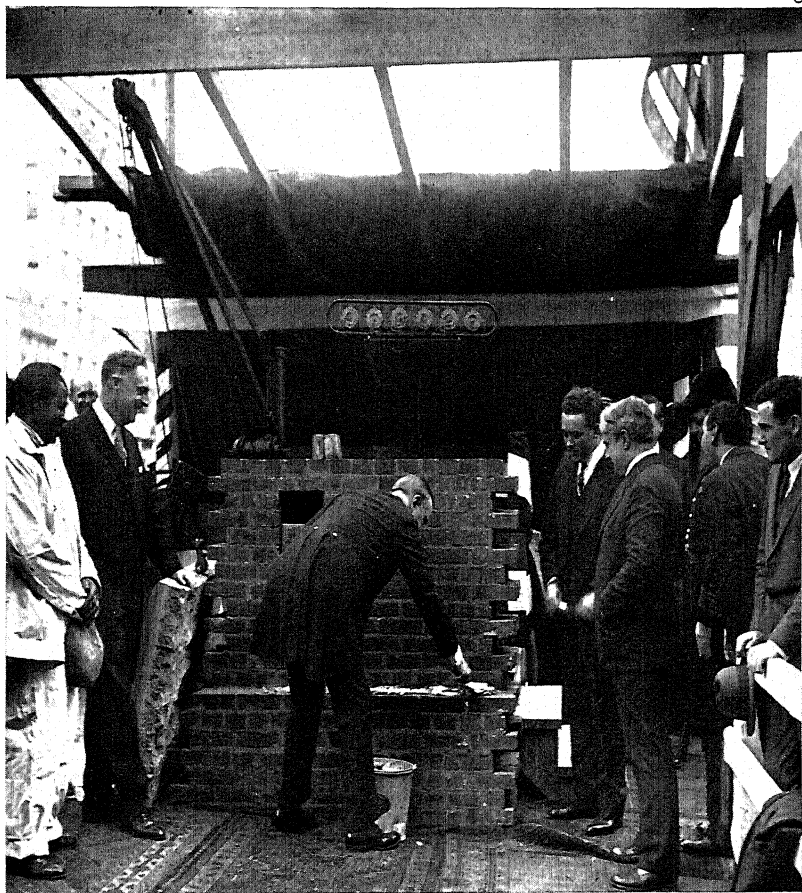


*Harris & Ewing*

Warren G. Harding, one of seven United States Presidents (Taft to Truman) who have been members of the National Press Club, casts ballot in 1922 club election. At far right is Robert Armstrong, then club president. On guard at ballot box are, from left to right: William A. Crawford, *Central News*; Theodore Tiller, *New York Times* and Southern newspapers; Paul Mixter, *Detroit Free Press*; and Edward Coffin of American Red Cross.

President Calvin Coolidge spreads mortar at cornerstone-placing ceremony for National Press Building, April 8, 1926. Frank B. Lord, *Buffalo Times*, and a former president of the National Press Club, keeps one hand on the stone. Just to President's right are Ulric Bell, club president, and Secretary of Labor James J. Davis. Press building was completed seventeen months later.

*Harris & Ewing*







*Wide World Photos, Inc.*

President Franklin D. Roosevelt smiles from behind his gadget-cluttered desk at one of the news conferences he normally held twice a week in the oval room of the White House. This conference was on August 25, 1939. In May 1949, 550 reporters held credentials permitting attendance at presidential news conferences.

Ladies and gentlemen of the press look down from Congressional Press Gallery (above flag) to report Franklin D. Roosevelt's account of Yalta conference. Roosevelt (at microphones, center) spoke from well of House at joint session March 1, 1945—six weeks before his death.

*Wide World Photos, Inc*





*Wide World Photos, Inc.*

Newsmen race from a presidential news conference (in oval room, off left) to telephones in White House pressroom (off right) after President Truman announced on August 14, 1945, that the Japanese had accepted surrender terms.

Harry Truman turns newsman—for the moment—as he interviews the newly elected president of the White House Correspondents Association, Robert Nixon (right), INS, on arrival at Key West, Florida, March 6, 1949. Nixon's predecessor in office, Ernest B. "Tony" Vaccaro, AP, is in center. President Truman had flown to Florida for a rest. The press followed in another plane.

*Wide World Photos, Inc.*



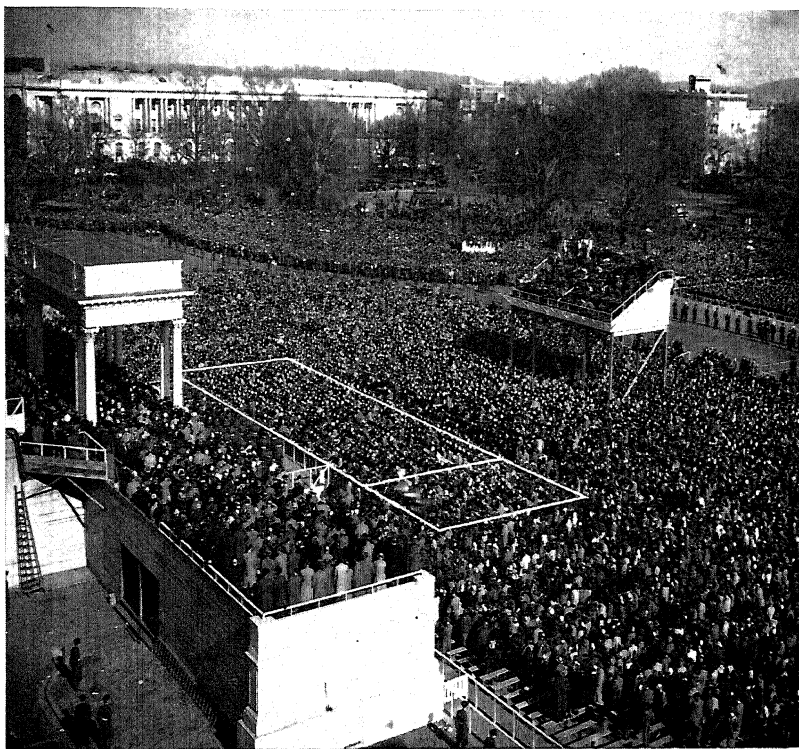


*Wide World Photos, Inc.*

Washington newsmen crowd around a smiling President Truman for a group interview aboard his 1948 campaign train. During pre-election months reporters accompanied major presidential and vice-presidential candidates on barnstorming tours which took them to the far corners of the nation. From fifty to sixty newspaper, radio, photo service, and newsreel representatives traveled with Truman during the campaign.

This diagrammed scene of the 1949 presidential inauguration gives some indication of the growth of the Washington news corps from a few dozen at the turn of the century to 1,281 accredited newsmen in 1949. White lines enclose the press seats (800) and the radio section (180 seats) in front of the platform (left) where President Truman took the oath of office. About 300 photographers—still, motion-picture, and television—recorded the events of January 20, 1949—almost 100 of them from a special stand on stilts (right) to provide a direct view of the oath-taking.

*Wide World Photos, Inc.*



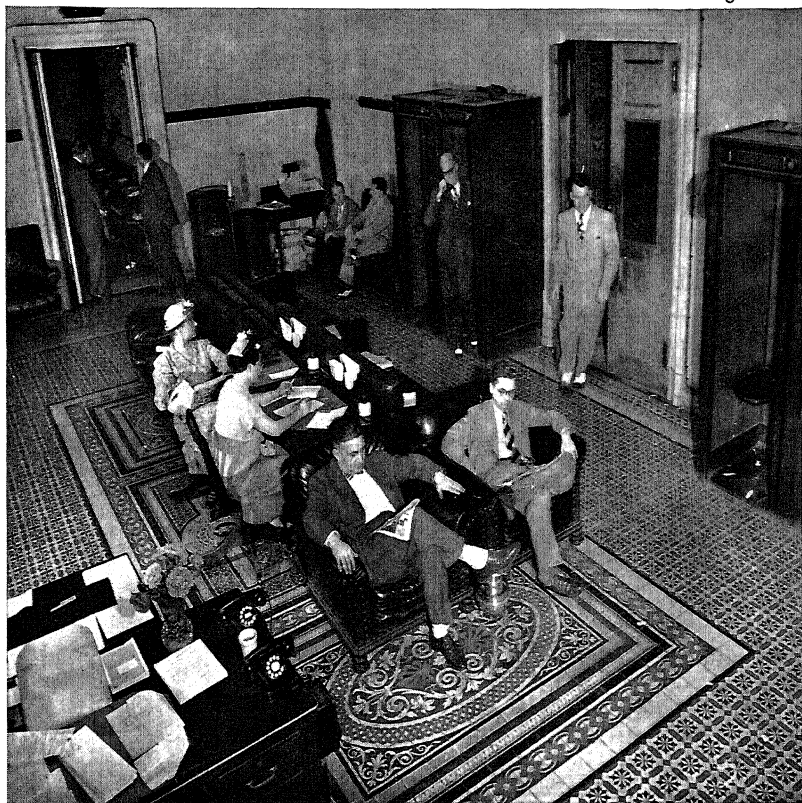


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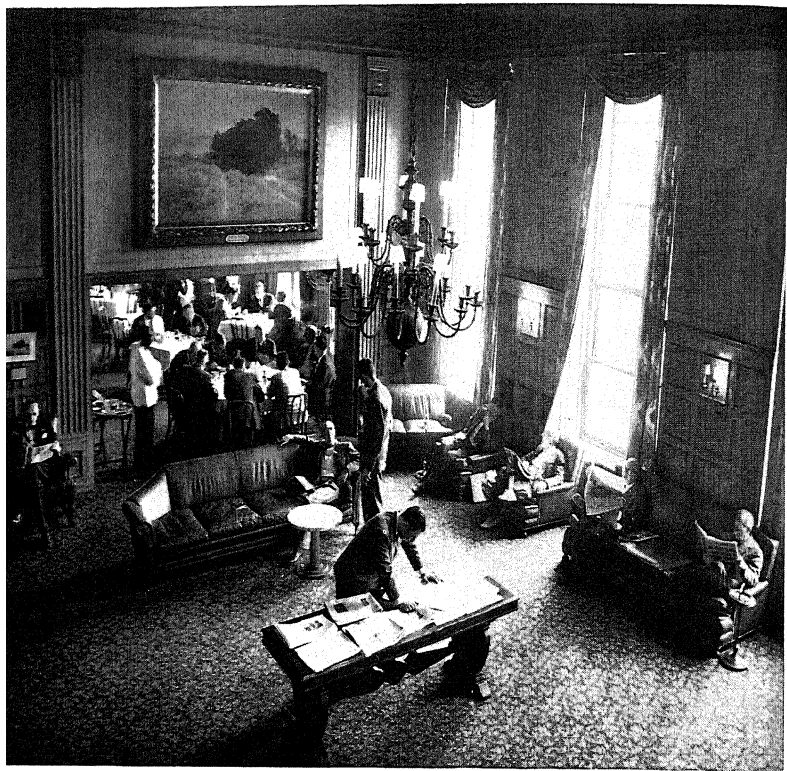
Capitol Hill takes on a Hollywood atmosphere during sensational committee hearings, such as this one on October 20, 1947, when the House un-American Activities Committee began a public recital of alleged communist influence in the motion-picture industry. In an arena framed by movie lights and cameras, radio commentators and recording technicians, still cameramen and reporters, the committee chairman, Rep. J. Parnell Thomas (R-N.J.) with hand upraised (right) swears in the first witness, H. A. Smith (left), a committee investigator. Thomas is flanked by other congressmen, while additional committee investigators (backs to camera) sit before microphones in center.

Just off the Senate Press Gallery (through doors at upper right) are spacious workrooms for newsmen who cover the United States Capitol. This is one of the rooms, which are equipped with typewriters, telephones, desks, and copypaper for reporters' use.

*George Tames*





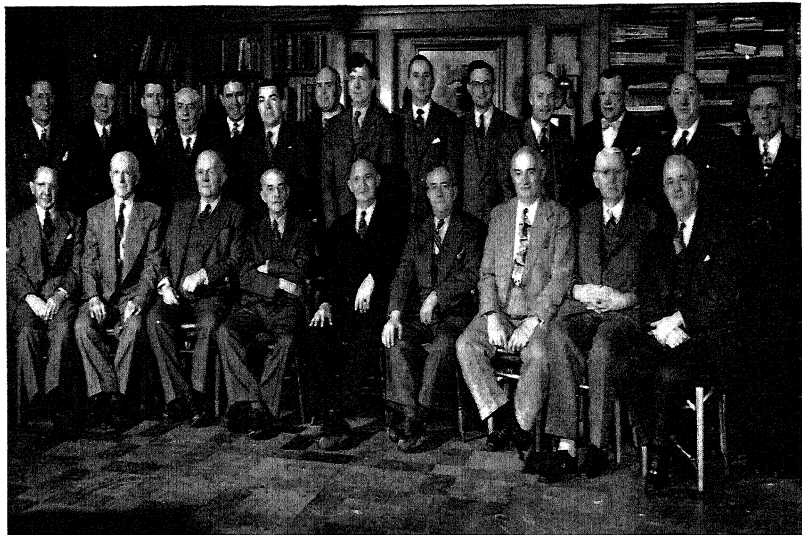


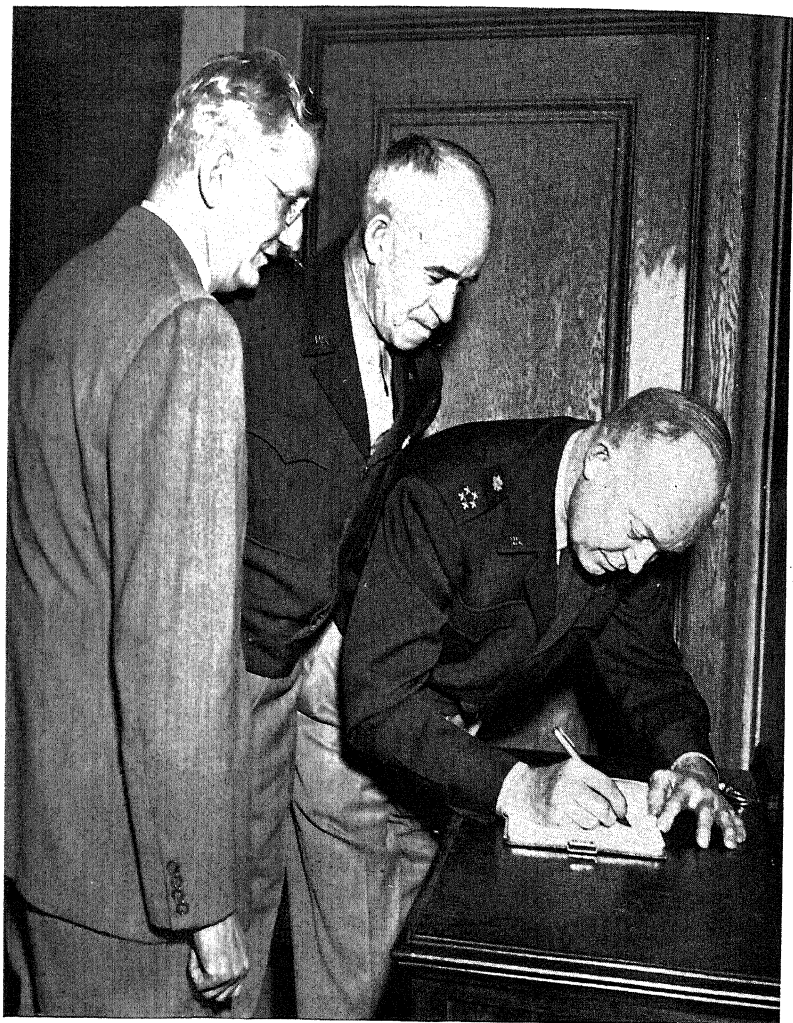
*George Tames*

This is the lounge of the National Press Club, atop the National Press Building in Washington. The club's main dining room is in left background.

Twenty-three of the past presidents of the National Press Club assembled in the club library for this picture in March 1948. From left to right they are: Seated—Clifford A. Prevost (president in 1942); Henry L. Sweinhart (1925); Earl Godwin (1919); Frank B. Lord (1914–15); Oswald F. Schuette (1913); Grafton Wilcox (1917); Carter Field (1923); Louis Ludlow (1927); Norman Baxter (1930); Standing—Sam A. O'Neal (1944); William C. Murphy, Jr. (1934); George W. Stimpson (1936); Mark Foote (1934–35); Edward Jamieson (1945); Felix Cotton (1943); Charles O. Gridley (1937); Bascom N. Timmons (1932); Richard Wilson (1940); Arthur Hachten (1939); Warren B. Francis (1947); Melbourne Christerson (1941); Harold Brayman (1938), and Paul Wooton (1946).

*Harris & Ewing*





*Wide World Photos, Inc.*

General Dwight D. Eisenhower signs the National Press Club register as he visits the club February 5, 1948. His successor as Army Chief of Staff, General Omar Bradley, awaits his turn. Their escort is Joseph H. Short, of the *Baltimore Sun*, 1948 press club president. At a club luncheon Ike said good-bye to the capital news corps before leaving for the presidency of Columbia University.

Almost as if anticipating such an incident Judge Isaac R. Hitt two weeks earlier had ruled from the District Court bench that news photographers were within their rights in taking pictures of people on the streets.

When Queen Marie of Romania visited Mount Vernon in October 1926 the grounds superintendent suddenly decided pictures would be prohibited. He thrust out his arm to wave away the cameramen, and just missed slapping the queen's nose. Published pictures showed the queen lifting her head to avoid the blow—or, as some uncharitably contended, to be sure the man's hand wouldn't obscure her from the photograph. Later in Chicago the Queen wearied of sarcastic remarks about photographers, arose at a dinner to declare, "The photographer is doing his duty, just as I am. I propose a toast to the photographers." No one took her seriously enough to respond, so she drank the toast alone.

For a time President Hoover fought shy of lens close-ups. But photographers didn't stop trying for a scene of the President and his "medicine-ball cabinet" at their morning exercise on the White House south lawn. A group of them hired trucks upon which they mounted cameras equipped with long-distance lenses and circled the White House grounds. Hoover immediately spotted them, stopped tossing his eight-pound exercise ball, and ordered secret-service men to shoo them away.

Later in Hoover's office the cameramen filmed the President in a formal scene surrounded by Senators James E. Watson of Indiana, Arthur Capper of Kansas, Joseph E. Ransdell of Louisiana, and Charles L. McNary of Oregon as he signed a farm-relief bill. "Stand still for just a minute," they instructed their subjects. After the shots were made Senator Watson broke the tension. "Those kodakers," he said, "are the only fellows in the world who could keep the mouths of four senators shut for three minutes."

The big photographic news of 1930—and for many decades, for that matter—was the introduction of the flash bulb. Its use permitted full freedom in camera work without danger in theaters, hearing rooms, and indoors generally. The new lamps, shaped like giant electric-light bulbs, with combustible paper inside (they've since been reduced drastically in size and increased greatly in

light values) were first used in Washington news work at the White House for a scene of President Hoover signing a forty-five-million dollar drought-relief bill and a one-hundred-sixteen-million dollar public-works measure.

The Associated Press in describing the debut of the flash bulb reported, "It blazed vividly, but with no report nor smoke."

At first the bulb and shutter could be synchronized only by guess. Automatic synchronization came later with other innovations in the news-picture business. Since the start of airmail in the early twenties, news syndicates had customarily shipped duplicate photographic plates to distribution centers in New York, Chicago, and other cities. The advent of Associated Press Wirephoto in 1935—and later of Acme's Telephoto and International News Photos' Soundphoto—put an end to this cumbersome system and permitted the dispatching of pictures by wire simultaneously with transmission of the news.

Perishable glass plates long since had given way to cut film, which had much faster emulsion speeds.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration marked the opening of a "golden era" for Washington cameramen. Roosevelt had a perfect sense of the dramatic and unusual. And he loved to travel. These factors produced one sought-after assignment after another for news cameramen.

But even a routine Roosevelt assignment generally had a special twist. There was the time the President in March 1934 drove to Union Station to meet Mrs. Roosevelt, just back from a tour of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The President gave his wife a hug and a kiss for their twenty-ninth wedding anniversary. It was excellent copy, and the sentimental news pictures went around the world.

Some of the best Roosevelt pictures caught him in relaxed and informal moods: eating a hot dog, munching peanuts at a baseball game, or with his pet Scotty, Fala, beside him. The photographers usually were permitted by Roosevelt to shoot whatever they saw, but occasionally there were restrictions. After withstanding a barrage of flash bulbs for birthday portraits in 1935 President Roosevelt took off his glasses to rub his eyes. A picture shot at that

instant appeared in the press with the caption, "The President Ponders Farm Problem." This put the entire Washington photographic corps on the spot, and the President's Press Secretary, Steve Early, ordered that thereafter photos would be made only when he gave the word to shoot, so they would illustrate no more than the intended story. The sequel was inevitable.

Several months later Early announced there would be space in the President's office for only one photographer during the swearing-in ceremonies for Postmaster General Frank Walker. The syndicates protested such an enforced pool arrangement under which the single photographer would provide all services with prints, but Early called the office of the Associated Press, where he had formerly been employed, and the AP's Charles Gorry was ordered to make the pictures. President Roosevelt was so amused by the appearance of the lone photographer that he ordered Early to make a shot of the new postmaster, the President, and the "brave cameraman." Soon thereafter Mr. Early announced he would in future arrange space for all photographers.

The era was replete with a variety of good news-picture copy. The President's annual birthday ball produced such shots as that of Senator Robert R. (Bob) Reynolds of North Carolina greeting Jean Harlow, the platinum-blond film star, with his best senatorial kiss. There were pictures of the topmost tip of the five-hundred-fifty-five-foot Washington Monument—made from a precarious perch atop the exterior of the shaft during cleaning operations. And then there was the famous picture of J. P. Morgan with a circus midget on his knee. In June 1933, during a Senate Banking Committee inquiry, someone with an eye for the unusual—a press agent later denied responsibility—placed the little lady on the financier's lap. Morgan was caught off guard, but managed to hold the midget long enough for a few flash bulbs to record an interesting footnote to pictorial history.

After Pearl Harbor more than half of Washington's professional news photographers left for overseas service, some with their own agencies or the military shooting with cameras, others doing their firing with guns.

At home for the first time in history women were admitted to

the news photographers' association, and some of them became very proficient.

Roosevelt was whisked in and out of Washington on inspection trips to war conferences and other missions. Sometimes photographers were left behind—lack of space usually was given as the reason—and sometimes they donned uniforms like Hugo Johnson of Paramount News and went with him. When Johnson in full military regalia arrived with the President at Mexico City welcoming ceremonies the band played both national anthems through to the end. Johnson had to stand stiffly at attention while the Mexican cameramen, dressed in civvies, moved about getting their pictures. Roosevelt noted Johnson's predicament and went through his greetings a second time for his benefit and that of the other uniformed American cameramen.

President Roosevelt's unexpected death, when the greater part of the world sorrowed with the nation, brought this era to a close.

The new President, Harry S. Truman, began his day early and often hustled about Washington without previous notice and little fanfare. Sometimes he would show up suddenly at the Capitol for a conference with his former colleagues or at Walter Reed Hospital for an informal call on the patients or at a reception at one of the hotels. Often he was out for early morning strolls at what many Washingtonians did not consider a respectable hour.

Those Presidential habits required of the news photographers a constant alertness. Even when traveling with Truman it was no safer for the cameramen to relax than the newsmen. Once the photographers had settled down peacefully aboard the Presidential train en route with Truman to a speaking engagement at Fulton, Missouri. A member of the train crew casually told them who was driving the Diesel engine that powered it. Hastily they grabbed up their cameras and were off to record the President at the controls.

After V-E and V-J days had passed into history the cry for "just one more" picture became so frequent that President Truman formed a mythical "One More Club." "You photographers," he said, "work harder than the President of the United States."

Men who were leaders in the capital news-picture field, like

Andrew (Buck) May of Harris and Ewing, Allen Dibble of the *March of Time*, and a host of others, had chatted with or photographed Truman many times at the National Press Club, first as senator, then Vice-President, then President. As an associate member of the club he, like previous Presidents, has been no stranger in the clubrooms. He was still Vice-President in 1945 when at an entertainment there photographers "shot" him playing a piano accompaniment to Jack Benny's violin. After a few bars they said they heard Jack Benny tell him with a grin, "Vice-President or no Vice-President, you've got to keep time."

And who can forget that alluring shot of Hollywood's Lauren Bacall seated cross-legged atop an upright piano in the club auditorium, while Vice-President Truman deftly fingered the keys?

Those are only a few of the memorable news pictures that have been made within the club's walls as innumerable great figures have trooped in and out during the last forty-one years as members or guests.

The cameramen say Truman has "the feel" for a news picture. It was he who provided the picture that won grand prize in the 1949 season's annual exhibition by the White House News Photographers' Association. He set the scene in St. Louis just after his amazingly successful re-election when he held up on the train's back platform a Chicago *Tribune* front page bearing the headline:

#### DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN

Thus it is small wonder that photographic coverage of Washington nowadays provides a striking contrast to the light treatment accorded the art in the days before World War I. The news photographer no longer is either stepchild or afterthought. At every big Washington news event the men of the camera corps are seen with their complicated gear—still cameramen with their Speed Graphics popping flash bulbs, newsreel crews with unwieldy machines synchronizing sight and sound behind huge blinding floodlights mounted on tall standards, and television cameras picking up the news in the making to be flashed direct



through the transmitters into thousands of American homes or to be recorded for later showing.

Photographers usually are the first of the news corps to arrive at Congressional hearings, notable White House occasions, or such history-making events as the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. They come in the *front* door, well equipped with badges, passes, and wallets stuffed with credentials. They seldom run into trouble, since they're as well known to the uniformed men who police the capital and its buildings as the leading newsmen.

Often elaborate preparations are made in advance by newsreel and television representatives for coverage of scheduled newsworthy events. At times stands must be constructed from which to obtain the proper angle for viewing a ceremony; there are wires to be strung so the floodlights will function properly. Often they consult White House officials, the Capitol architect, or committee staffs on prior arrangements. At times they pool resources with representatives of government agencies in planning advance facilities that cost hundreds of dollars.

When the day of the big photographic event arrives it's real-life Hollywood on the Potomac. Cameramen seem to be everywhere. They have regularly assigned positions, but invariably some will venture into almost every other conceivable spot to get an angle shot to his liking. Some have even crawled through a ventilator and out onto a narrow ledge inside the Caucus Room of the Senate Office Building for that different view of a Congressional hearing.

In May of 1949 one hundred forty-eight men and women in the news-picture business were members of the White House News Photographers' Association. One hundred and seventeen were in still-picture work—cameramen and picture editors for newspapers, news-photo services, and news magazines. Twenty-two were managers or camera and sound-recording operators for newsreel concerns. And nine were in television-news work.

The most thorough coverage of national events is provided by the still-picture services, four of which have staffs numbering from five to twenty. Associated Press Photos has the largest staff, but Acme Newspictures, International News Photos, as well as AP

distribute a large part of their Washington picture copy by wire from their downtown offices.

The four Washington newspapers—the *Post*, the *Star*, the *News* and the *Times-Herald*—maintain staffs of from three to twelve. They photograph events of local importance, as well as many of national and international import.

It's a far cry from Ben Franklin's political wood-cut cartoon, Mathew Brady's Civil War work, or even the capital coverage of World War I.

# Handouts

BY BRUCE CATTON

Bruce Catton, a veteran of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* and the Newspaper Enterprise Association Washington staffs, held high public-relations posts during World War II with the War Production Board and the Department of Commerce. His book *War Lords of Washington*, 1948, is a revealing report on the government's war-publicity operations.

The evolution of the government press handout is as shadowy as the ancestry of the handout's parent, the government press agent.

Both can be traced back to that innocent period when government was smaller and simpler than it is today, when Washington was essentially an overgrown county seat, and when a reasonably active reporter could cover every news source in the capital without undue strain. The present situation in which handout and press agent (renamed respectively "press release" and "information specialist") have become omnipresent, a combined headache and necessity for the press corps, chiefly reflects the enormous growth in the size and complexity of government. It also reflects the curious ability of democracy to adapt unlikely instruments to its own use.

As a matter of definition, a handout, or press release, is the official mimeographed announcement by a government department or agency or a subdivision thereof of some official action taken, the word "action" being used very broadly to include anything from the text of an official's speech to a news bulletin regarding the size of the corn crop. The information specialist, or government press agent, is the government employee who pre-

pares, issues, and distributes the handouts and who in addition is available to the working press as one of the government's official question answerers. Any department or agency which is productive of anything substantial in the way of news—and for the matter of that several which are not—sets aside special quarters as a press-room or headquarters for the news correspondents. Desks, typewriters, and telephones are available there for use of the press, the handouts are distributed there, and one or more information specialists are on tap to expand and enlarge on the news in the handouts, to answer inquiries about matters not covered in handouts, and in general to help the reporters keep in touch with the department's news sources.

The entire operation—pressroom, handout, and press agent—is justified nowadays by the fact that it provides access to information which the press corps needs and which the press corps could not otherwise get without great trouble and expense. The whole intricate network of government information bureaus must stand or fall on its ability to serve that purpose: that purpose and no other. The anxiety of a government official to appear in the headlines, to have his fellow citizens think well of him, to acquire a reputation, and as a welcome by-product to continue in office is something else again. A government press office which exists to minister to that anxiety is simply a waste of the taxpayers' money. The entire operation is justifiable only to the extent that it provides the press—and the public—with an essential service.

But the line of descent, nevertheless, runs back to the needs of the politician rather than of the press. Specifically it goes back rather surprisingly to the "party press" of a century and more ago, when every administration had its own newspaper organ which was accepted as an official spokesman for the President and his party. The ultimate ancestor of today's information specialist is apparently such a person as Amos Kendall, the Kentucky editor whom Andrew Jackson brought to Washington as ghost writer and policy advisor, or to Francis Preston Blair, Kendall's protégé, who showed up as editor of the *Washington Globe*. And the prototype for all subsequent Congressional complaints about government press agents is probably to be found in the angry attack on Ken-

dall, voiced in the House of Representatives in 1838 by Congressman Henry A. Wise of Virginia: "He was the President's thinking machine, and his writing machine—aye, and his lying machine!"

Obviously any administration equipped with its own newspaper had little need to issue handouts to correspondents; it simply printed its announcements in its own paper and let nature take its course. The handout as such seems to have developed because of the telegraph, when some alert Presidential adviser realized that it would be a good thing to have Presidential addresses and messages to Congress printed as widely as possible on the day of delivery. Out of this came the custom of running off advance copies and making them available to the press—first done apparently in the 1840s. But for a long time the idea went no farther than that. Even the Civil War, first of all wars to get extensive press coverage in something like the modern style, did not see the creation of any central information bureau in Washington or of any press-relations officers in the field. Washington correspondents could drop in at the War Department and copy such dispatches and announcements as might be made available, but very little was done to ease their path. Correspondents attached to field armies were often given semiofficial appointments to the staff of the commanding general, but this was simply a means of making it legal for them to be housed, fed, and transported at government expense; they remained entirely on their own, had no official duties whatever, and were expected to scratch around for their own news even when a battle was going on, with no spoon-feeding from headquarters. (Not a bad idea in many ways; a correspondent who saw with his own eyes that the army had been outmaneuvered and beaten said so in his dispatch and did not have to rely on the commanding general's own carefully worded explanation of the affair.)

The innocent way in which press and government acted when a handout actually was issued in those days is unforgettably depicted by Carl Sandburg in his *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*. Sandburg tells how Noah Brooks, correspondent for a California paper, casually dropped in at the White House one afternoon late in 1864 and found Lincoln scribbling out a little

one-paragraph feature story about the handling of a recent appeal for the release of two Confederate prisoners of war. The President gave it to Brooks and asked him not to send it to his own paper, but to see that it got printed locally in the *Washington Chronicle*, a paper with which Brooks had no connection whatever; the reason for this request being, as the President put it, that, "I've got a childish desire to see it in print right away." Brooks did as he was asked, the *Chronicle* printed the story—without thinking to mention that this was a by-line piece by the President of the United States—other papers copied it from the *Chronicle*, and in due time it was reprinted all across the country.

The gap between that kind of informal operation and the modern setup of information men, mimeographed handouts, release dates, and carefully planned systems of distribution—including the handout table at the National Press Club—is, of course, very great. It symbolizes the enormous difference between the Washington of that day and the Washington of this: partly a difference in the relationships between press and government, but basically a difference in the sheer size and complexity of government itself. Today's press could not for a minute put up with the quaint planless method of issuing government news embodied in the Lincoln-Brooks episode—but neither could today's government. Government today is too big, the things it does are too important, the citizens' need to know all about it is too imperative. That curious institution, the government handout, was an inevitable outgrowth of the change in government itself.

But most of the evolution has taken place in the last quarter century. It is only comparatively recently that the government handout has justified itself as a necessity to the press and hence to the proper functioning of democracy. Throughout most of its history its origins in the old party-press system are clearly visible. The still widespread suspicions of "government press agents" are a perfectly natural holdover from the time (still within living memory) when old-fashioned press-agentry was the principal task of the government pressman. The government pressman was hired because his boss wanted to sell something—his own reputation, some particular administration policy, or what not; he was hired



weeklies, and so on. Mr. Durand admitted that there was no specific authority of law for hiring a press agent. He justified the appointment on the bureau's general authorization to incur "incidental, miscellaneous and contingent expenses" necessary to take the census.

Apparently the congressmen did not quite know what they had come up against. They agreed that census taking ought to be publicized and expressed concern over details. One of them asked plaintively why a press release should carry a release date—"Why should not the public have the benefit of it without a release date?" Another was disturbed by the warning printed at the top of all handouts that any paper which disregarded the release date would be removed from the mailing list. Still another feared that this was a device to discriminate against Democratic newspapers and in favor of Republican. But in the end everything was explained satisfactorily, the request for a Congressional investigation was denied, and Mr. Durand goes down in history as first in a long line of government officials to answer to Congress for hiring a press agent.

It is clear that at the time of this hearing the government hand-out had gone through quite a period of evolution. Even though it was still new enough so that the average congressman didn't understand it, it is perfectly obvious that this device wasn't just something the Census Director had thought up on the spur of the moment. The canny Osgood with his mailing list of twenty thousand must have been quite an operator, but neither mailing lists nor officially franked press releases were new. The Census Bureau was using an established instrument—although it is noteworthy that the press agent did not deal with the Washington press corps direct: he mailed his releases out and shunned personal contacts.

Congress returned to the fray in a much more aggressive manner two years later when Congressman John M. Nelson of Wisconsin demanded an investigation of "a press bureau maintained at public expense in the Department of Agriculture." Mr. Nelson doubted that there was any warrant in law for this work and asserted that, if there was not, "this practice of using public funds for private purposes, for the exploitation of officials and departmental work in newspapers, ought to be abolished."



What had happened was that, with a three-million-dollar meat-inspection bill pending, the Department of Agriculture was pulling all the strings to get it passed, franking its releases to the newspapers à la Osgood, and including in them attacks on various parties who were opposing the passage of the bill. In addition to creating enemies on Capitol Hill this had begun to annoy the press corps; Nelson remarked that "many times a correspondent goes to a bureau and there writes his story, only to find that the press agent has forwarded a garbled and unfair news story to his newspaper by mail."

It developed that Agriculture was not alone. The Post Office Department had a press man listed as a fourth-class clerk, the Biological Survey had one, the Census Bureau had some sort of successor to the prodigious Osgood, and Civil Service was announcing examinations for "editorial assistants"; and Nelson complained, "If this press activity is to continue, other bureaus and departments will soon amount to an expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars."

Congress by now was no longer innocently asking whether a release date was a nefarious device for injuring Democratic editors. It was in a much more sophisticated mood, and it knew enough about the government handout to see the need for very strict controls. A year later it passed a law prohibiting the spending of money on publicity agents unless under specific authorization of Congress. One result of this law is pointed out by James L. McCamy in his book *Government Publicity*. Department heads began to invent new names for the job, and in place of the Census Director's frank admission that he had hired "what might properly be called a press agent" titles like director of information, editor in chief, and director of publications began to appear. The use of euphemisms was not really new, however; after all, Amos Kendall himself went on the government payroll as a mere clerk in the Treasury Department.

Congress went a step farther in 1919, prohibiting the use of any part of an appropriation for services or publications designed to influence any member of Congress in his attitude toward legislation or appropriations. This law is still very much in force and is

rigidly invoked by Congressional appropriations committees, as every government information director can testify. As a means of keeping the government information function in line it is probably the most effective control measure yet devised.

Congress was suspicious and rightly so, for so far the handling of government publicity still followed the original line of descent. That is, the handout and the press officer were used to help the politician rather than the press. The elected or appointed official wanted something—whether to get his own name in the papers, or to advance a cause or a program—and he set up a handout operation to get it. How far this might meet the needs of the press, if at all, was no concern of his. The government handout was beginning to grow, but it was growing straight in the direction of propaganda.

It took a world war, Herbert Hoover, and the New Deal to bring about a new concept. It must be admitted that these elements of change make up rather a mixed grill, but they were effective.

To begin with there was the Creel Committee on Public Information in World War I. This was in a sense a propaganda outfit, but it was also a news center. At its offices on Jackson Place the correspondent could pick up all manner of press releases bearing on the war and on war activities, and the government handout suddenly began to appear as an aid to the reporter rather than a headache. It made sense to have government announcements duplicated and available to all comers in one central spot, rather than requiring each correspondent to go to each news source and either wait his turn for an interview or painstakingly copy an original document. The committee's offices closed when the war ended, to be sure, but the new idea had been planted.

Along with this there were the war activities of the Treasury Department, which was publicizing the various Liberty Loan drives and was issuing a constant stream of news releases telling how the drives were progressing. It was right at this point incidentally that one of the little problems involved in the production of literature under government auspices came to the surface. The Treasury asked several well-known writers to produce short pieces

on the Liberty Loans to be used as press handouts and printed as leaflets for general distribution. Among the authors was Ring Lardner, then at the height of his fame with his *You Know Me*, Al articles. On request Lardner wrote one of his famous "busher" letters about the Liberty Loan drive, filling it with the grammatical errors, misspelled words, and tortured syntax which were two-thirds of the fun in his pieces on bush-league baseball players. The Treasury people accepted it with thanks and sent it off to the government printing office to be set up for the handout leaflets. Back it came presently—with grammar, spelling, and English construction painstakingly changed, according to government style, into correct and utterly lifeless prose.

Then came Mr. Herbert Hoover.

He, too, got his hand in during the war, when as Food Administrator he preached the doctrine of the "clean plate," publicized mixed-flour bread, meatless Tuesday, and the like. He enlisted the aid of the press largely through the use of handouts and, like the War Industries Board, got a great deal of publicity simply by being helpful to the press with the large number of technical matters that needed description in everyday language.

After the war, when a Republican administration took over, Mr. Hoover became Secretary of Commerce. At that time the Department of Commerce, like most other old-line departments, was a pleasantly drowsy place as far as the newsman was concerned. The monthly import and export figures constituted most of the department's news. Carbon copies of these were typed off and gently proffered to those who might be interested in them, but that was about the extent of it. Under Mr. Hoover, however, things began to happen. The work of the department was greatly expanded. Dr. Julius Klein, director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, was oppressed by the realization that a large part of this bureau's work consisted in the production of what he dubbed "perishable information"—information that would be extremely useful to businessmen provided the businessman could just get it while it was still hot. Consequently the department established a pressroom and began to stock it with handouts. These handouts originally were designated "press memoranda,"

and in the beginning they were mostly carbon copies of State Department reports from commercial attaches, but the scope of the operation grew. P. J. Croghan was brought in to handle the job, and the Department of Commerce became a lively news center.

There are two points to be noted here. The first is that the use of the handout expanded in this department because the department's own job was expanding. The department was doing more things and hence was making more news, and a pressroom plus an information director plus mimeographed releases became a necessity from the reporter's own standpoint. (A similar development was taking place in the Department of Agriculture about the same time, where the growing importance and number of crop reports brought about the use of the same mechanism.) The average correspondent who was covering day-to-day news in Washington in the early twenties was apt to have a good half-dozen government departments on his beat. He might be the most energetic man on earth, but he could hardly devote more than an hour a day to each one. This new setup helped him. It made it possible for him to do his job. The handout was continuing its evolution in the direction of being a service to the press; the information man was becoming less and less an advocate and more and more a public servant.

But the other point to be noted is that while Mr. Hoover's handouts were performing this service they were also helping Mr. Hoover. After all, by 1928 he had become the overwhelmingly logical choice for his party's Presidential nomination—and the fact that his Department of Commerce had been a lively news source for eight years certainly had not hurt him any in this development. The implications were lost on no one in government, which is to say that motives of the purest self-interest began to operate in each department and agency as an incentive to provide expanded services to the press.

Finally along came the New Deal.

A great deal has been said and written—much of it very impassioned—about the vast expansion in government which began to take place in March of 1933. Whether that expansion was good or

bad is beside the point. It *did* take place—and Washington lost all resemblance to the overgrown county seat and became a bewildering complex of activities, many of them new and strange, and all of them highly important. Originally most of the really hot news came from the White House and the Capitol; now it was apt to develop anywhere at all, and a development which would affect the lives and fortunes of millions of Americans was likely to occur in some hitherto obscure bureau in, say, the Department of Agriculture or in one of the new alphabetical agencies. The NRA, National Recovery Administration, for instance, with its myriad code authorities, industry committees, and what not, was simply too big and intricate for any one man to cover in the traditional way. The government handout became an absolute necessity, an essential element in the step-by-step process by which the citizen learns just what his government is up to.

By the mid thirties the National Press Club itself recognized the fact that the handout was an integral part of Washington coverage and established the famous table whereon were deposited daily stacks of the public and private handouts of Washington. Now the correspondent did not even need to make the rounds of the agencies to pick up the handouts. He could examine all of them at the Press Club table under circumstances of some ease and comfort. Old-timers still tell about the day when one member emerged from the bar somewhat uplifted and swept all of the handouts off the table into the trash barrel—which practically disrupted the work of the press corps for the rest of the day.

At any rate the handout burgeoned and reached its full flower under the New Deal; did so, be it noted, because the tremendous expansion of government made it a flat necessity. Even the Supreme Court finally fell in line. Until the late 1930s the Court issued no handouts. Reporters took down decisions as they were read from the bench, and if they missed a point or misconstrued a finding that was their own hard luck. Then at last the Court hired a press officer and took to issuing mimeographed copies of decisions, which not only eased the newsman's job but actually made for more accurate reporting.

How many government press agents are there by now anyway? There are all sorts of estimates, and the estimates vary widely—not to say wildly—depending on who makes them. The only solid figure this writer has been able to get comes from the Civil Service Commission, whose records show a total of 2,818 persons employed by the federal government in what is called the Information and Editorial Series. That figure is as of July 1947; the level hasn't changed much since, and it is roughly applicable today.

That total includes 548 stenographers, secretaries, filing clerks, and the like, and it also includes a scattering of men in the "professional" classification who are employed on various government technical publications. On the other hand it does not include the uniformed information officers in the press-relations sections of the armed services. Making allowances for these subtractions and additions, it would appear that there are currently between twenty-five hundred and three thousand government handout men.<sup>1</sup>

A fairly good-sized battalion, that—but far below the "thirty thousand government press agents" guess that so often finds its

<sup>1</sup>Dick Fitzpatrick, a member of the National Press Club, writing in the *Journalism Quarterly* for March 1949, published by the American Association of Teachers of Journalism and the Association of Accredited Schools and Departments of Journalism, Iowa City, Iowa, gives a study of government press releases. He shows that in the week December 3–9, 1947, 286 press statements containing 209,297 words were issued by government agencies. Some were factual statements concerning contracts, announcements of rulings, decisions, hearings, and the like. But four containing 10,166 words were issued to influence legislation; twenty-three containing 45,615 words were issued to influence policy; and one hundred and thirteen containing 55,080 words told of activities of the issuing agencies and might be regarded as press agent material for those agencies.

Of these press statements, the White House issued four, the Department of State sixteen, the Treasury twelve, the National Military Establishment thirty-six, and the Department of Agriculture thirty-seven. The greatest number emanated from the Department of Commerce—sixty-six. During the same week press releases left at the National Press Club included seventy-one from foreign governments, from labor unions, and from associations. See also *Government Publicity in Practice in Federal Administration*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1939.

way into print. This latter figure is usually attained by defining as a press agent any government employee who spends all or a substantial part of his time producing material for publication. That definition sounds reasonable enough until you look at it, and then the bottom falls out of it. For it is so broad that it includes practically all of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, a good part of the Census Bureau, and thousands of people in the Department of Agriculture—people who do indeed produce material for publication, but who are not press agents by any imaginable stretch of common sense.

There is no way to determine how much the government spends on its press-information work. The figures would have to be collected one at a time from forty or fifty separate appropriations schedules, and even then there would be no way to be sure one had all of them. An extremely rough way to make a guess would be to assume that \$4,500 a year is an average salary for the three-thousand-odd information employees. That works out to a total of \$13,500,000 a year—and admittedly it is not much better than a blind guess.

Now there is no sense in pretending that the one motive operative in every official breast through all this expansion of the use of handouts was the simple altruistic one of trying to help the press. Human motives always are mixed, the example of what the press release had done for Mr. Hoover was still a living memory, and the evangelistic fervor which pervaded so many New Deal agencies made the work of at least some of the new information bureaus resemble a holy crusade rather than a dead-pan effort to make objective news available. Some of the new information offices were designedly set up as "educational" endeavors and devoted themselves assiduously to the effort to sell a program or a point of view, and beyond any question a good deal of money and many man-hours of time were spent on thinly disguised propaganda work.

But the controlled cynicism of the press corps and the undying suspicions of Congress carried a wholesome corrective. After all, the press corps had the final say on the use, if any, that was made of the material produced by the information bureaus, and Con-

gress passed on the money that was spent to maintain them. Congress, to repeat, was preternaturally suspicious and remains so to this day. Over and over it has investigated the government's publicity work, and the appropriations subcommittees of each house can always be relied upon to go over each department's appropriation bill and use a fine-toothed comb on the section providing money for the division of information. By now the abuses have been pretty well eliminated, and the government handout—plus the whole informational operation which accompanies its production—has pretty well justified itself by its works. What justifies it is the fact that it is useful to the working press. It might be worth noting in passing that in the spring of 1949 the Republicans in Congress banded together and hired their own information officer!

But it must be emphasized just the same that the handout as an instrument of government needs eternal watching. The criticism directed against it is frequently partisan, prejudiced, and woefully uninformed, but the criticism is useful just the same. Government will always be tempted to use the handout for propaganda rather than as an aid to the press and the people. This temptation will be strongest in time of national emergency, which is precisely when it is most important for press and public to get a clear, unvarnished picture of what is really going on. The centralized information operation of the Office of War Information type by which handouts from diverse agencies are controlled, synchronized, and harmonized by one agency with overriding authority may be a necessity in time of war, but it is an extremely dangerous operation. Far too dangerous, certainly, to be justified in time of peace. For such an agency can go a long way toward giving an administration control over its own publicity. The urge to use it so as to create the impression that government's job is being done properly—as a substitute for going out and doing the job properly in the first place—is apt to become too great for weak official flesh to resist.

The handout in short is both a necessity and a problem. Rightly employed it is enormously useful to the democracy—but those words "rightly employed" need to be underscored in red. The government handout can't possibly be abolished unless the gov-



ernment itself is reduced in size and scope to the proportions of the early 1900s, which is clearly impossible. But it can and must be kept in its proper sphere, a job which would appear principally to be up to two people:

First, to the handout artist himself—the government information man, distant descendant of the Census Bureau's Mr. Osgood. He has to see his job right and act accordingly, which is to say that he must realize that his sole excuse for existence is the function of helping the press corps tell the people what is happening in government. He is neither an advocate nor a special pleader. He is simply a government servant in the good old-fashioned meaning of the word. He is not there to cover up bad news, to make weak actions look good, to build up a department or an agency, or to make a cabinet member look like a statesman. Unless he can see himself as a public servant, paid to help the people know exactly what their government is up to, and unless he can steadfastly operate in that capacity he had better get into some other line of work and get there promptly.

Second, there is the correspondent. He has to use handouts, but he does not have to let them become the crutches without which he can't walk. By insisting on going behind the handouts he can keep them honest. If he lets them make him lazy, the cause he represents is done for—and so for that matter sooner or later is he. In the long run the government handout can't be a serious menace to the free flow of objective news unless the Washington correspondent consents.

Right at the moment he seems to be a long way from giving that consent.

## Autocrats of the Breakfast Table

BY CABELL PHILLIPS

Cabell Phillips is the Washington correspondent of the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*. He has previously worked on southern and mid-western papers, including several years in government information services.

*There are a sort of men whose visages  
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond;  
And do a wilfull stillness entertain  
With purpose to be dressed in an opinion  
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit;  
As who should say, "I am Sir Oracle,  
And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark!"*

*Merchant of Venice, Act 1, Scene 1*

The columnists are the glamor boys of the newspaper business. As every young sports writer dreams of the day he will become a Runyon or a Grantland Rice, as every village movie critic pays secret homage to the ideal of a Lyons or a Winchell, so the Washington neophyte when first he comes upon the scene frames his destiny in the glittering likeness of a Pearson or the immaculate erudition of a Lippmann. They are the heroes who have broken the shackles of impecunious publishers and sadistic city editors. They are the giants who mold events instead of being molded by them. They are the idols who have risen above the herd to palpable, obvious success.

And indeed it is not a mean nor a wholly illusory goal upon which the young Washington correspondent has set his eye. The columnists and commentators are, in a profession becoming ever more circumscribed, the freest of free spirits. The world is their

beat, and all the mysteries, villainies, romances, and paradoxes thereof. They can look upon it with a friendly or a jaundiced eye, pick what suits their instant mood, and write as they please, with only the obligation that they write interestingly.

They are the elite who have been set free from the stern and frustrating rule of objectivity, the ritual of who-what-when-where-and-why. They can say what they think (if they can think what to say) about politics and religion, peace and war, Republicans and Democrats, mice and men. They are free to castigate an enemy, salve a friend, admonish presidents and kings, and project their opinions across continents and oceans. Unhampered by the petty tyrannies of the city desk, they can soar as far as their wings will take them into the wild blue yonder of Self-Expression.

Fame and prestige are indisputably theirs. They are the titans of present-day journalism, the Bennetts, Greeleys, and Pulitzers of their time. Often they seem to sit as a People's Advocate, a sort of public conscience, at the councils of the mighty. They are the interpreters of great events, the formulators of opinion for inarticulate millions. They are known familiarly in countless towns where they have never set foot, and they are quoted as ultimate authority over cracker barrels and cocktails from Bangor to Burbank. In official Washington they are feared and respected above the generality of their fellows. And throughout the country they wield an influence on the public mind that is conceivably greater than the collective influence of the papers which publish them.

But they are also, it should be noted, fallible men and heirs to all the weaknesses of mortal flesh. They have fears, prejudices, guilt complexes, complaining wives, and moments of misgiving like the rest of us. They live under the constant threat that some blunder, some egregious misfire of fact or interpretation will strip them intellectually naked. The fatal temptation to take themselves too seriously, to become pompous and omniscient is always present. And, while the public has a strangely indulgent mood toward them, an almost irrational tolerance for inaccuracy and conceit, they are sometimes pulled from their pedestals in disgrace. It is a long and dreadful journey from the ivory tower

to the rim of a provincial copy desk, but it is a journey some of them have had to make.

On the whole, though, it's nice work if you can get it, and the pay is all right too. It is a worthy goal for any young—or even aging—Washington correspondent. But the hard fact remains that it continues to be a pretty limited field, where many are called and but few are chosen. It apparently takes something more than simple yearning to make the grade.

So let's try to see just what the art of the columnist is—how it has grown and prospered, the facts of its existence, and what it adds up to in the larger picture of national-affairs journalism today.

There are a great many Washington correspondents who can with justification call themselves columnists. Nearly every bureau has one or more men who turn out interpretive background or editorial dispatches at regular intervals for their papers. Many of these are excellent, representing a great deal of honest journalistic effort and reflecting the keen insight and knowledge of the writers. Their circulation is limited to the individual paper or perhaps the chain by which they are employed. Conspicuous examples of this type of columnists are Roscoe Drummond of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Arthur Krock of the *New York Times*, Edwin A. Lahey of the *Knight* newspapers, and Raymond P. Brandt of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* to mention only a few. At the lower end of the spectrum there are others in this category who shall remain nameless. Their product is of a lesser caliber and predicated upon the assumption that a saving magic attaches to the simple device of a Washington dateline. Some such columns deal speciously in gossip and alleged "news behind the news." Others pontificate hollowly on foreign and national affairs. In each case the paucity of the writer's experience and knowledge, his incapacity for understanding and interpretation is embarrassingly apparent to everyone, it seems, except his managing editor.

But for the purposes of this discussion the emphasis is upon the syndicated Washington columnists, the commentators whose work is known beyond the circulation area of any single paper and whose influence, if any, is national rather than regional. We are

speaking here of the Walter Lippmanns, Marquis Childses, Drew Pearsons, and other luminaries of that bright nirvana toward which so many Washington newspapermen yearn.

There are several schools of thought as to how it all began.

One of the undisputed pioneers was the late Frederic J. Haskin (the third president, incidentally, of the National Press Club), who some forty years ago initiated a daily Washington feature known as the "Haskin Letter." It was a combination of news, gossip, opinion, and historical fact which was widely published almost up to the time of his death in 1942. Some years after he began the letter he introduced a curious adjunct of journalism, the "Question and Answer Column," which was to be widely copied by other papers, syndicates, and magazines.

Another early starter of considerable merit was Sir A. Maurice Lowe, Washington representative for the London *Post*. His five-day-a-week summary of Washington news, spiced with amiable philosophy, was syndicated by mail by the New York *World* during parts of the first and second decades of the century.

Many are of the opinion that Paul Mallon was the originator of the Washington column as it is essentially known today. The circumstances of this accouchement are dramatic in the best tradition of a Hildy Johnson or a Bob Casey.

Back in the late 1920s Mallon was an alert, fleet-footed young Capitol Hill reporter for United Press. In those days the Senate had the cozy habit of taking certain votes in secret session, only the final tally being made known through the aseptic and un-revealing columns of the Congressional Record. Mallon one day in 1929 managed to get a bulletin on the UP wire giving the complete box score of the Senate's confirmation of Roy Owen West as Secretary of the Interior within less than an hour after the vote was taken. This caused some angry fulminations among the senators, and warning fingers were shaken in the young upstart's face. A few weeks later he repeated his feat under circumstances vastly more embarrassing to the Senate. The subject of confirmation was Irvine L. Lenroot, whose name had been linked to some power-lobby scandals, and the job was a judgeship on the U.S. Court of Customs. This time the senators blew their tops and withdrew

Mallon's press-gallery privileges. But in so doing they blew Paul Mallon into fame and fortune. He became a journalistic St. George and front-page news all across the country. His talents were in such demand that he left the UP and began to sell his Washington dispatches to all takers through a syndicate.

Mallon retired from the scene in 1945 simply, as he said, because he had damn well had enough. But his column "News Behind the News," a five-days-a-week feature, reached at its peak more than three hundred papers. If it was not *the* first Washington column, it certainly was the progenitor of its particular type, the revelatory, gossipy, fact-plus-hunch-plus-opinion column. Its tribe has multiplied prodigiously in the last twenty years.

It is this writer's opinion, however, that the credit for being the *first* Washington columnist, as the term is understood in its larger connotation, goes to David Lawrence. Certainly he is the most durable. His column on national affairs is still a major feature in two hundred papers today, and its origins can legitimately be traced back to 1916.

At that time he had been in the AP Washington bureau for five years. He had come there in 1910 from Princeton with the reputation of a prodigy, a handicap he promptly overcame by proving really to be one. He ingratiated himself with the diplomatic corps and won their confidence. Later, when one of the interminable Mexican revolutions broke out, he managed to be the only American reporter on the spot. He was a disciple of Woodrow Wilson and "The New Freedom" and established the best pipelines of any Washington reporter into the inner cloisters of that administration. His on-the-spot coverage of negotiations leading up to the Versailles Treaty was outstanding.

All of this redounded to the credit of the AP, but not much to that of Dave Lawrence, for by-lines were virtually unknown to the AP in those days. To escape this intolerable anonymity (and presumably to improve his economic position) he shifted in 1915 to the New York *Evening Post*. His stint was to write the daily lead story out of Washington under his own by-line. This was not an uncommon assignment for Washington correspondents in those days. Lawrence, however, gave his stories a new twist by append-

ing a shirttail of succinct interpretation. Not content to give simply the who, what, and where of Washington events, he gave the *why* also. He set the current happening in the larger canvas of what had gone before and what might reasonably be anticipated in the future. This was an innovation in news reporting three decades ago, and it caught on. Lawrence's stories came to be more and more interpretive and less and less spot news. The *Post* began to syndicate them in 1916, and in 1919 encouraged him to set up his own syndicate. In 1920 he branched out still farther with a telegraphic financial and feature news service known as the *Consolidated Press Association* and then the *United States Daily* and then the *United States News and World Report* and so on to the point that now twenty-nine years later David Lawrence is the best living contradiction of the canard that reporters are poor businessmen.

Lawrence, however, did not initiate the *opinion* column. He and his earlier imitators had limited themselves rigorously to interpretation of the news, telling what it meant, not what they thought about it. The distinction for creating the modern by-lined column of editorial opinion appears to belong to Walter Lippmann. He launched it cautiously when he shifted from the lately expired *New York World* to the *New York Herald-Tribune* in 1931. He moved his base of operations to Washington in 1933. His column took on a bolder look, and its syndication began to boom. His temerity shocked many of the orthodox, including Lawrence. But when they saw that the temple walls did not crack under this heresy they began to put opinion into their columns too.

The Golden Age of the columnists can thus be pegged to the period of the Great Depression. One authority has estimated that anywhere from one hundred and fifty to two hundred generally syndicated Washington columns came into being in the years between 1930 and 1934, most of them to expire after a brief but gaudy existence.

Two factors seem to have influenced this burgeoning.

First (but not necessarily most important), the Broadway columnist had already established a vogue. O. O. McIntyre, Mark Hellinger, and Walter Winchell were the pioneers in this effort

of making the glittering lights of Times Square seem as familiar as those on Main Street. They brought the fascinatingly wicked fripperies of stage and screen stars and the headliners of the Speakeasy Set straight to the breakfast tables of Omaha and Dogpatch. They capitalized elaborately on the long-familiar journalistic axiom that people are more interested in people than anything else. And they spiced this interest by telling—or professing to tell—the most intimate and personal details of other people's lives. It required no stroke of managerial genius to figure out that if this paid off for Broadway it also ought to pay off for Washington, too, whence a great many people were beginning to turn their eyes and thoughts.

Second, the popular preoccupation with government which was given such a stimulus by the depression and the high drama of the New Deal generated a demand not only for gossip and “news behind the news,” but for intelligent interpretation and background as well. The pious evasions of the Hoover administration had made the people cynical and suspicious of official pronouncements from Washington. Even the conventionally honest and straightforward news reports failed to satisfy their craving to know what was going on and why. The columnists, on the spot and wearing a cloak of either hard-boiled sophistication or Olympian detachment, answered the need.

By the middle years of the thirties the Washington column had solidified its position as a journalistic institution. There was something of a stampede by newspapermen to break into this promising new pasture, and there was a staggeringly high mortality among them. But a few of the early starters have survived: Drew Pearson, who with Robert S. Allen created the fabulously successful “Washington Merry-Go-Round”; Joseph Alsop, ex-*Herald-Tribune*, who started business with Robert Kintner, and, after a wartime hiatus, resumed with his brother Stewart as partner; Mark Sullivan, the tired liberal of the muck-raking days; Frank Kent, the unreconstructed Tory of the *Baltimore Sun*; and, of course, Walter Lippmann and the indestructible David Lawrence, to mention the most conspicuous examples. A number of specialists invaded the field during the war years:



retired generals and admirals who wrote assuredly (but with some fantastic blunders) about military strategy, aviation experts, economic analysts, foreign-affairs specialists, etc. Few of them as individuals have lasted into the postwar period. But they demonstrated that a public appetite exists for much of the fare they offered. The result is that the contemporary Washington columnist has had to extend himself well beyond the field of politics and the narrow construction of national affairs. He must write knowledgeably today on military matters, economics, science, and foreign policy as well. This added obligation has strained the talents of some to uncomfortable lengths.

Accurate statistics on the columning industry are impossible to obtain. It remains one of the most ruggedly individualistic enterprises in the free-enterprise system. Most columnists are private entrepreneurs, and the relation between them and their syndicates and even of their "home" paper, if they have such, is most often one of principal and agent. Earnings, circulation, readership, etc. are highly guarded trade secrets. However, some reasonably safe conjectures can be made.

The number of syndicated columnists fitting our general description and operating out of Washington at the time of this writing (spring 1949) was forty-six. With a few conspicuous exceptions such as the *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Chicago Tribune* there is scarcely a daily paper in the country of as much as twenty-five thousand circulation that doesn't print one or more of them an average of three times a week. Thus it is reasonable to estimate that some fifty million newspaper readers each day read—or have the opportunity to read—the product of some Washington columnist. Most papers, however, are not satisfied with a single columnist. To achieve balance many of them pair off a conservative Lawrence with a liberal Tom Stokes or a gossipy George Dixon with a thoughtful Ernest Lindley. For top honors in distribution the palm undoubtedly goes to Drew Pearson. His "Washington Merry-Go-Round" is reliably reported to have four hundred and fifty subscribers with a gross daily circulation of about eighteen million. Peter Edson, whose column is distributed by Newspaper Enterprise Association

is bought by a greater number of newspapers—between seven hundred and eight hundred—but they are predominantly small or medium-sized, with a substantially lower gross circulation. It is to be doubted if any other Washington columnist at this time boasts as many as three hundred subscribers, though again we are dependent upon conjecture; those who know (the columnists themselves and their syndicates) simply won't say. At the other end of the scale several of the newcomers, as well as some of the veterans whose popularity has diminished, get along on considerably less than a hundred subscribers. It seems to be generally accepted that anything less than twenty-five subscribers, which must include one or two papers of better than a hundred thousand circulation, spells financial failure.

What are the criteria for a successful Washington column, successful, that is, in the sense of being able to command over a period of years a following sufficient to pay the freight?

On sober analysis the answer does not seem to reside in the observance of any of the classical virtues enshrined in the journalism textbooks. Indeed some of the most "successful" Washington columns persistently flout those virtues.

One in particular thrives on a splenetic hatred of the memory and family of Franklin D. Roosevelt. One whose prestige is built largely on his occult preoccupation with goings on "behind the scenes" is a frequent and unrepentant offender against truth and basic reportorial accuracy. Others ride their personal hobbies—reclamation, tax reform, a big Army or Navy or Air Force, a better deal for the Indians, etc.—to the uttermost limits of exhaustion. And still others cast all rules of logic and objectivity overboard to become palpable propagandists for a party or a program or a person. And yet they "succeed" year in and year out.

On the other side of the scale are many columnists who in the best tradition of the late Raymond Clapper are able and conscientious reporters, who are well informed and have excellent sources of information, whose dispatches are well reasoned, fair, and judicious, who work at their trade with energy and imagination. Yet this dedicated approach is no guarantee of longevity and material reward. Each year the "good" and the "bad" columnists seem to die off in about equal numbers.

On balance then, it seems that the ultimate measure for "success" as a columnist is the ability to write interestingly; not learnedly, not penetratingly, not even well; but in a manner to capture the emotional or intellectual interest of enough thousands of newspaper readers to make him a profitable "property" to his syndicate. The columnist must be an individualist and stamp his product indelibly with his own personality. Whether it be the critical and scolding personality of a John O'Donnell, the evangelism of a Tom Stokes, or the austere intellectuality of a Walter Lippmann, his particular personality must pervade his work, and it must elicit the positive response—the interest—of many thousands of newspaper readers. The columnist who would survive cannot be all things to all men. He must devise an approach to the national scene that is peculiarly his own. If that approach—or style or technique or whatever it may be called—is attractive to enough people who buy newspapers, it will not matter a great deal how deficient he may be in the reportorial arts. This is not to say that integrity, knowledge, and industry are wasted attributes in the columnist. Certainly most of the Washington practitioners possess these virtues in varying degree. But none is so essential to the magical formula of success as the capacity to write interestingly. That is the common denominator of the craft.

It is an axiom that columnists wield more influence upon the public mind than any other group in our society save, as H. L. Mencken would have it, priests and herb doctors. That is impossible either to substantiate or disprove, but the weight of circumstantial evidence favors the affirmative view.

Readership surveys indicate that columns in general are read by approximately 30 per cent of all newspaper readers, the range running from something like 15 per cent for the more erudite essayists up to 65 per cent for a Winchell or Pearson. The significance of this statistic is simply that the readership rating for straight editorials and similar thought-provoking matter is of the order of 12 to 15 per cent. Ergo *if* editorials wield any influence whatsoever upon the public mind, the columnists, being read by so many more people, wield a proportionately greater influence.

Anyone familiar with the processes of Congress is aware of its

extreme sensitivity to columnar comment. Doris Fleeon, let us say, writing upon the paucity of educational opportunities in the South, is pretty certain to find her comments quoted on the floor by some Senatorial advocate of federal aid to education. Conversely, Lowell Mellett, when he takes off after the racial bigots in the House, is likely to hear himself described as a dangerous Red by the Hon. John Rankin of Mississippi the next day. Most members of Congress are avid newspaper readers, and most of them have their favorite columnists. It is unquestionably true that such men as Walter Lippmann, Arthur Krock, and Drew Pearson do upon occasion affect the course of legislation and national affairs through their columns.

This same sensitivity, moreover, runs through the executive branch of the government. Indeed, few Washington columnists could stay in business without at least one tamed cabinet member (usually men of normal vanity and ambition) in their stable of informants. Government programs have been materially altered to win the approval or avoid the ire of various columnists.

The speed of modern communications and the plethora of current news has made today's metropolitan newspaper a fearsome and frustrating thing to the average reader. Harassed and confused as he is by the struggle for survival, he is overwhelmed by the sheer bulk of news which he feels it is his obligation as a good citizen to absorb. Thus he is tempted to skip all but page one and turn to his favorite columns in the hope that he will find there not only the top news of the moment in capsule, but also a ready-made opinion about it with which he can impress his fellows at the office next morning.

And finally the columnists endow the news—or at least the editorial pages—with personality. As editors and publishers have retreated over the last quarter century into the cold and impersonal anonymity of corporate efficiency, the columnists have moved in to supply the intimate “you and me” relationship for which the readers instinctively yearn. People, it seems, like to be told what to believe, and they would rather be told by another person than by an inanimate institution.

Thus the columnists have reinvigorated the journalistic corpus

with some of the vitality it had in its lusty youth. Whatever their shortcomings as individuals, their collective contribution to national-affairs journalism has been profound and constructive. They have made themselves as nearly indispensable to the average newspaper of today as, say, want ads and comics. And to this observer that will continue to spell "influence" until a better yardstick is devised.

## World War II

BY LYLE C. WILSON

Lyle C. Wilson after service in London and New York came to Washington with the United Press bureau in 1927. He has been bureau manager since 1933. He has received awards for distinguished journalistic performance from the University of Missouri and the Atlantic City *Headliners*.

Sunday is a day off for Washington newspaper people, or most of them. Washington cherishes the entire weekend. This particular Sunday not only was a day off, but glorious. Winter had not yet settled on the Atlantic seaboard.

The biggest weekend local news had been the formal report of the Secretary of Navy that our own Navy was "second to none." Earlier in the week the House of Representatives had passed the Third Supplemental National Defense Appropriations Bill, a matter of \$8,243,839,031. The vote had been 309 to 5. President John J. Jouett of the National Aeronautical Association had just reported that within twelve months our annual production rate would exceed fifty thousand airplanes a year.

Washington felt it had had reason to be what it was: safe, warm and comfortable. In Griffith Stadium Washington's beloved Redskins were playing their last professional home game of the season. A great many of the admirals, generals, and high civilian brass were watching. Others were playing golf. The community was out in the open, but for the lag-abeds, the hung-over, and the ill.

That is how it was on the day of infamy, the seventh day of December 1941 in Washington, D.C.

Shortly after 2:35 P.M. Steve Early, White House Press Secre-

tary, picked up his phone and asked Louise Hachmeister to set up a simultaneous conference call to the three press associations.

"All on?" asked Steve urgently, and called the roll.

"This is Steve Early at the White House," he said with as much composure as he could summon. "At 7:35 A.M. Hawaiian time the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. The attacks are continuing and— No, I don't know how many are dead."

That was about all Steve had then. The time of waiting for events had ended. By telephone, broadcast, and loud-speaker the call went out. Idle caddies raced around golf links calling men back to their desks. In Griffith Stadium bewildered thousands heard one and another and finally scores of army, navy, and government personages urgently paged. As the big shots scrambled out of their places others hurried away too. They were the newspaper and radio men and women who had heard those urgent calls and suspected what they meant.

Radio broadcasts put the brakes screeching on many an automobile within one or two hundred miles of Washington that day, turned it around, and started it home faster than the law allowed.

Hour by hour the cruel facts pounded in. Pearl Harbor was a shambles, the anchored fleet a ruin. There were hundreds, now thousands, dead or wounded. In the space of an hour and twenty-five minutes in Hawaii the United States had suffered its most crushing defeat at arms.

Not unnaturally by early Sunday evening the gathering at Washington's National Press Club approached Presidential-election-night size. Newsmen caught in a storm of crisis sought one another's company, one another's information and opinions, and perhaps one another's comfort in the easygoing headquarters where they were accustomed to find these things. But there were no election-night gaieties.

With the somber news the capital press corps took up its biggest job. For some the job would be to learn what it is to die. For others it would be to suffer despair, discomfort, and great fear to send the story back. For those who stayed in Washington the job was to cover the biggest story up to now, to cover it under the

rules of censorship, sometimes under the galls of officious official stupidity, always under pressure of edition time.

It was a job calculated to separate the men from the boys and the women from the girls.

The Washington war beat didn't, of course, always look that important. Bending to their unsurpassed copy load, newsmen often could find nothing on it big or inspiring enough to take the chill from the air. It took things like the comings and goings of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to lift the news above its dismal level.

Nevertheless probably more phases of the war were covered from Washington than from any civilian capital in military history. Its communiqués from field and fleet operations were usually the top ones, and the information available through the offices of Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall and Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, was essential to tying these and the reports from the front correspondents together and giving them their full meaning.

The city on the Potomac was the mainspring of the war's political footwork and of its vast and often confused economic coordinations, wherever the international conferences were held. People who fell into the habit in those years of calling it a world capital were thinking of these things and thinking accurately.

Again on the domestic scene Washington from the beginning took charge of the immense operation of mobilizing the American people's huge and complicated economy, their far-spread resources, and their prodigious energies for total war. Everything from the Selective Service draft and the allocation of steel plants to the limitation of the flounces on women's dresses proceeded from the capital. All this, too, kicked back on the press corps. Agencies, special authorities, co-ordinators, committees, new instruments of government were born every night to accomplish these things. As each emerged squawling from the federal womb the reporters were there, checking the new names and faces of the VIPs (Very Important Persons) in charge of them and ready to begin the official biographies, sometimes ending in curious fade-outs and official obituaries.



How we did it makes quite a story—mainly a story of victory over newsmen's headaches.

War coverage was under way from the instant of Steve Early's world-shattering phone call. On that particular story the State Department already was fully staffed for an historically profane conference between Secretary Cordell Hull, the Japanese Ambassador Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, and Special Envoy Saburo Kurusu. Before three o'clock principal news offices and newspapers had the White House, the Pentagon, and the Navy Department well plugged.

Everybody there was sufficiently alerted for the cloudburst of disaster in the next few days: Japanese raids on Manila, Singapore, Hong Kong; invasion of Malaya and Luzon in the Philippines; the attack on Wake Island. In the murky air of global explosion the war declarations were almost routine, including the Latin-American; Japan's, Germany's, and Italy's against us; our retaliating ones; and the British action against Japan.

Then followed weeks and months of confusion, bad news and worse rumors, and of constant, if sometimes fallacious, experting at the National Press Club. Many urgent problems were ignored and some nonexistent ones solved with great *éclat*. Bataan in the Philippines fell in April 1942, and Corregidor in May, while some press corps military savants were still urging the recall of Generals Douglas MacArthur and "Skinny" Wainwright from the Far Eastern Theater. General Jimmy Doolittle's heartening air raid on Tokyo between these calamities inspired some of our amateur scientists to speculations that some bigger and better explosive—atomic physics was already in the air—might spark lethal volcanic eruptions in the Japanese islands.

All these by benefit of communiqué were largely Washington stories. So, as the Nazis tried to cut our shipping lines in 1942, were the year-long fiery sinkings off the Atlantic coast—when anything at all could be printed about them. So in May and June were the naval battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. Perhaps too much so. Months passed before the cautious language of the official reports was sufficiently clarified to convince the downhearted that Japan's edge in sea power had been decisively blunted. And, al-

though the trials and six electrocutions took place in Washington, a too rigid communiqué system left the case of the eight German saboteurs landed on American coasts in the summer of 1942 still something of a mystery to the capital's journalists.

Things did not begin to straighten out even moderately until the Marines took their first bloody nibble at Guadalcanal in August. After that more factual and specific communiqués and fuller reports from field correspondents gave the Washington press corps something tangible to talk about to the Pentagon's bigwigs when they went questing for information as to what the American public's war news really meant. But it took another disaster and a monumental headache in the war's international politics to make the capital coverage situation anything like reliably functional.

In its indirect way the National Press Club played a part in the improvement. On October 12, 1942, the Navy announced the sinking—as of nine weeks previously—of the U. S. cruisers *Quincy*, *Vincennes*, and *Astoria* and the Australian cruiser *Canberra* in a Japanese smash attack off Savo Island. That day at the club's cardroom round table—a luncheon spot where efforts at wit, wisdom, and statesmanly viewpoints alternatively languish and flourish—the Navy seemed to be in the doghouse for keeps. And a good part of this critical sentiment got under the skin of the late Neely Bull.

Bull was a relative of the naval Chief of Operations, Admiral King, by marriage. He knew as much and suspected more about the true situation in the Navy and its problems than did any of the others. He put the matter frankly up to King. For the information of some half-informed reporters would the admiral risk a secret meeting? The admiral would not.

King was counted among the roughest skippers in the Navy whether aboard ship or on his land bridge. Next to reserve officers, for whom he had much contempt, he disliked most the thought and company of newspaper reporters. Bull knew all this, but he persisted. And, although many a goggle-eyed Navy veteran still refuses to believe that it happened, King finally caved.

From an evening in early November 1942 until the war's end the admiral met at intervals with a shifting but always small group

of newsmen. These meetings took place at Bull's home. When Neely died they were transferred to the suburban residence of Phelps H. Adams, Washington correspondent of the *New York Sun*. They came in time to be pleasant for both the admiral and his questioners, and King learned to make use of the press with the skill of a public-relations counsel. An outstanding example occurred when President Roosevelt, ill-advised, was thinking of kicking General George C. Marshall upstairs to some rather undefined global command or to put him in charge of our armed forces in Europe. King helped torpedo that one, and he used some of his friends of the press to do it.

Next it was the turn of the Army Staff Chief General Marshall to turn some lights on. In the middle of the evening of November 7, 1942, came the news that the Army in the dark hours had landed on the shore of North Africa. It broke in Washington, and it was titanic. It meant that the war had taken a turn toward inevitable climax in Berlin, Tokyo, and Rome. I was one of the many newspapermen who wrote the big story that night, and I know how it felt. It made little shivers run up and down my back.

But within a week there was serious trouble, not military but politics. To the amazement of the Allied Intelligence our forces found the French Vichy Government's Admiral Darlan in Algiers, not only found him but were forced to make use of him as a political weapon of war. Upon the head of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commanding the operation, fell a barrage of abuse.

The left wing of American politics and some others set up a loud shout of "foul." The complaints boiled down to charges that it was all a plot, the first move of American military appeasement by men who had been playing the Nazi game. The public showed a tendency to join the chorus of protest.

Under such circumstances there was only one ambassador fit to serve between the unhappy Administration and the uneasy public. Mr. Roosevelt left the problem in General George C. Marshall's hands. So on the second Sunday after the landings there was an early ringing of telephones in the homes of about thirty newspaper and radio men. They were summoned to the Pentagon to be there right away.

Assembled in Marshall's office, they were told by the General that Darlan's presence in North Africa had been entirely unforeseen, but that it had been necessary for Eisenhower to use him since he was there. Marshall conceded that Ike was in a bad political hole, and himself too. Marshall's strategy was to read for upward of an hour to the assembled reporters the dispatches from Eisenhower on Darlan. All of Ike's astonishment and fears were there, also his actions step by step to by-pass Darlan if he could. Marshall ended his reading and said, in effect:

"Well, gentlemen, there it is, fair and square. If you want to go on beating hell out of Eisenhower for something he didn't do I can't help it."

That conference was off-record, of course. But it opened some vistas of understanding among those present. By word of mouth it illuminated things for some who were not there. Before the admiral was assassinated at Christmas the Darlan scandal had been cut down to a size where it could no longer do the North African campaign any damage.

Marshall used the off-record conference procedure from then on and with utter frankness. One day he disclosed to a lot of pop-eyed correspondents the Allied battle order in the West, our own, and the Russians'. He cheerfully conceded that if the Russians knew their dispositions had been disclosed to us they might do almost anything short of quit the war. But Marshall never sought or gained the intimacy of Admiral King's secret meetings with newsmen.

This kind of access to the facts and to over-all policy factors did not solve all the newsmen's problems, of course. But it helped us to avoid going off on tangents of snap judgments, amateur opinion, and plain peeve when the facts themselves could not be revealed to a puzzled public. As more and more the front correspondents took over the actual military coverage after the North African landings Washington became chiefly a place where the main aims of strategy and the war's high politics were interpreted. But through the King and Marshall meetings we usually knew when in doubt where to go for the best light there was.

Meanwhile, beginning within a day or two after Pearl Harbor,

we had the Office of Censorship to work with. And I say "work with" advisedly—rather than cope with. For, if any wartime agency in Washington was born with the know-how, the OC as opened, administered, and closed by Byron Price of the Associated Press was it. Some newspapermen, your correspondent among them, hold that the selection of Price to head it was the most felicitous choice made by Mr. Roosevelt in all his three terms plus.

Price hated censorship, but he administered it as a voluntary system, with an implacable determination that it should work. His office came in time to be the court of last appeal to reason open to the Washington reporter. If it were all added up I venture that Price forced muddleheaded military, naval, and civilian personnel to disgorge more information than he ever specifically suppressed.

His office had the power to okay as well as to stop any story for publication regardless of the department or agency of government it referred to, with the single big exception of the White House. The exception worked out pretty well too—most of the time.<sup>1</sup>

I personally ran afoul of one of the jams when it didn't work and of one of White House Press Secretary Steve Early's rare but spectacular outbursts of temper to boot. It came at the end of the January 1943 Casablanca Conference, President Roosevelt's first one overseas. There were leaks all over the world about Casablanca. They added up to published bits and pieces about the President's whereabouts, his intentions, and the probable time of his return—the latter in very general terms—and a somewhat impressive account of what currently was going on among the top men of China, Great Britain, and the United States.

I laced them all together in a story and submitted it to the Office of Censorship. OC ruled that it was merely an account of what already had been leaked or speculated on in print and therefore harmless and fit for publication.

But on the morning it was printed reporters found Presidential

<sup>1</sup>In the following chapter, Chapter 14, "Passed by Censor," Byron Price himself tells about his activities and those of his office in handling censorship problems. In the same chapter Elmer Davis, director of OWI, tells of his battle to get the military to release information to the public.

Press Secretary Early livid with anger. When he found words Steve expressed the unqualified opinion that the writer of that dispatch had joined in a Nazi-Japanese plot to obtain the instant assassination of the President of the United States. He was mistaken, of course, and ultimately got over his mad. Steve was like that, but a good man, too, who himself had had a hand in planning the censorship's successful operations. If there should be another war the press corps bids now for a couple of men like Early and Price, one at the White House and the other censoring the news.

Simply for the sake of orientation, of course, and with the Censorship's full knowledge Washington's good reporters made it their business to know many things which never could be printed. Indeed the National Press Club membership probably lugged around enough secret information to have helped the Axis win the war if it could have got hold of it. Locally, for instance, the good reporters knew the obscure sidings in Maryland and Virginia from which Mr. Roosevelt could take off secretly in his private train. They knew about his Shangri-La hideaway in the Maryland mountains. That ceased to be a secret one day, though, when Mrs. Roosevelt's daily newspaper column made sprightly reference to it.

And now and then something unimportant ceased to be secret simply because the press corps wouldn't let it stay that way. This happened once when Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. authorized his publicity man at the Treasury Department to announce that his boss was going to take a Florida vacation, but that his movements must not be reported for security reasons. To that the press said, "nuts" and briefly reported that Morgenthau had departed to sun himself for a while.

All things considered, I don't think it is an overstatement to say that the press corps and Byron Price's Office of Censorship together eventually pretty well educated the government's military agencies in Washington in how to get their war reported—straight on the line and in due sense of proportion. Some things were never straightened out entirely. To the end General MacArthur's daily communiqués of the war in the Pacific islands bristled with rhetorical triumphs, but partial fictions were never permitted to

obscure his genuine over-all advances and strategic achievements.

When D-Day came, with all the chips down, military expertness in public relations made it something of an anticlimax for Washington reporters. For the men who scrambled ashore in Normandy it was anything but that. But in the capital there was little excitement. Everyone knew it was coming, although none among us knew just when. The corps of Washington correspondents had little to do about the landings in Normandy except to write the stories of applause and confidence that burgeoned.

Finally on August 6, 1945, came an hour which was not an anticlimax. From the White House office of a modest little man who twenty-five years before had been having his troubles with a haberdashery business in Kansas City came a military and scientific announcement bigger than all the discoveries of Columbus, Galileo, Copernicus, Harvey, Edison, and Peary rolled into one. On Hiroshima in Japan, a city of two hundred thousand souls, an atomic bomb had been dropped and exploded. The tops in war stories was here—and a peace story which grows bigger and newswise better with the difficulties and promises of our times.

The Washington reporter will undertake to handle anything if he can get his hands on some facts and a telephone. In this case, aided by an enormous scientific briefing in the facts supplied by the government agencies concerned in launching it, he handled the coming of the Atomic Age—and still is seeking, against doubtless necessary obstructions, to report the news of what it may finally mean to us.

As to both the war- and the home-front coverage in Washington, I believe in giving credit where it is due. I have been a working newspaperman in the national capital since 1927. It is my honest opinion that had the era of perpetual big stories broken on us any time before the Roosevelt New Deal whirlwinds the press corps never would have caught up with the news. Nearly nine years of covering Franklin D. Roosevelt before Pearl Harbor was a sound break-in for covering anything else on earth.

Nevertheless nobody can tell the story of the home front's

developments in anything like full detail. It was just too complicated.

Nobody won any stars or ribbons for covering the home front. And nobody got killed either. But in some ways it was tougher than the battle front. There were no home-front rest areas. The sun came up each day on a changing Washington. Mr. Roosevelt inherited a mad governmental organization which had grown over the years with considerably less supervision and much less relationship to natural laws than grew the famous Topsy. During the New Deal years he had amazingly complicated it. And Mr. Roosevelt was not the man to bring order from that kind of chaos, come the biggest war in history.

Hence, as the war went on and national organization problems thickened, agency succeeded agency and administrator succeeded administrator or director succeeded director until a whole operation was blurred by the successions. But they all worked one way or another. Production, price, wage controls, rationing!

For my money the biggest wartime story which developed from scratch in Washington itself broke in its final form on October 2, 1942. On that date Congress passed and Mr. Roosevelt instantly signed an anti-inflation bill. Congress had been balky. Gallery reporters for weeks had been telling the country of the slow movement of this legislation through Congress. It was a delicate reporting job, and it was done in the main with discrimination. Many congressmen hesitated to lay severe controls on the people. Many also feared to give those controls into Mr. Roosevelt's hands.

But, with the fleet, the Marines, and the Army on the aggressive in the Pacific, more good news just around the corner in North Africa, Mr. Roosevelt was in a position to demand. White House reporters bulletined on September 7 that Mr. Roosevelt said he would put on price ceilings himself if Congress refused to act. On October 2 he had his control law, and the press and radio had their hands full. That Act directed Mr. Roosevelt by November 1 to issue a general order stabilizing prices, wages, and salaries affecting the cost of living.

These hurry-up far-reaching actions touching every person in



the land never could have been effected without the media of information of which the press is the foundation. Rules, regulations, guides, and orders which could not have been distributed any other way reached officials and the public through the press. Oratory and the broadcast word could reach many. But when the public had to be told what to do and how to do it there was no substitute for the printed word.

The act of October 2 was only the beginning. In all the regulatory war developments the pattern was the same. The stay-at-homes were doing a safe, secure, but essential and difficult job of helping to lick Italy, Germany, and Japan. Prices got fixed and remained relatively steady. Wages had a tendency to wobble up a bit. Full overtime employment, coupled with the demands of the armed services for goods of every kind, made the civilian comparatively long on money and short on things to buy. But one way or another, by legislation, bureau regulation, and occasional acts of mayhem upon the national economy, what was needed at the fighting fronts flowed there, and nobody on the home production lines starved or suffered more austerity than the human frame can bear.

What happened to press corps life in wartime?

Workwise, it was caught for four years in the grip of mounting personnel shortages. As each new front opened men with the deft touch of long experience left to cover it. Or men left to fight or to work on the government agencies' vital public-relations staffs. Replacements in the larger bureaus could not always maintain the standards of the departed. In result newspaperwomen's real break came with the war. In one office the roll call of women reached twenty-two. Some of them were tops and are on the job yet. Those not fitted for big-time journalism have disappeared.

In a way quite a lot of duplication of coverage went on, and some conflicts. Navy and War Department pressrooms came to be double and triple staffed. The Office of War Information, sired by Propaganda out of the Office of Facts and Figures, the Information Division of OEM, and the Office of Government Reports, set up the biggest newsroom in town. One of the basic

disputes of the war between government and reporters was whether OWI would cover the news and report it to the reporters, or whether the reporters would cover it first hand. It all is a bit remote now, but it seems to me that dispute never was quite settled, so that OWI went its way covering the news and so did the regular reporters.

For the government craftsmen as well as for the newsmen life in its relaxations centered in the National Press Club as usual. From that Pearl Harbor evening on it was the place where everything that happened was talked of; where everything that might or should have happened, or that anybody wanted to happen, was expanded upon in ideas of infinite variety. So the club became in due season the greatest center of information, misinformation, speculation, and of secrets, real or imaginary, upon this continent.

To its special luncheons came government and visiting celebrities with off-record thoughts and global and domestic reporting which if laid end to end, it has been calculated, would have bridged some of the more notable gaps in the starry universe. Yet among the four-hundred-and-fifty-odd men usually attending these revelations—press and radio reporters and commentators, club guests, and associate members with insatiable appetites for the off-record—there never was a leak of vital information.

Eventually, though, quite a few things in the club's life changed. Scotch dried gradually away until its sale was restricted to members only. Even then there were days when the bartenders had to mark it absent. Along with the scotch shortage other easy-going ways of the club diminished. After all there were more people in Washington than ever before, and the club's popularity in ratio to the increase more than multiplied.

But in time of crisis in a lawless world order came among us to dwell for a time. Members alone were permitted within the precincts of the bar. Not before had the privilege of the bar been questioned to almost any man. And that included those who'd been in for a drink as a guest and stayed on, you might say, over the years. There were others who preferred the club washrooms to the more public facilities on all floors of the building and who, although nonmembers and perhaps unacquainted with any,

found the bar also accessible and came often to take great part in the debates and dialectics and found firm friends and even on occasion may have been elected to office. Who knows? Ours is a friendly place. But with a guard on the gate and a challenge for all the host of free riders diminished and was gone.

Finally in the victory spring of 1945 the club organized an institution believed to be unique in the annals of wartime privation—the sit-down cigarette queue. It began, of course, with the cigarette dearth which hit all American society for a while. Dealers furnished the club a normal supply, and things would have gone well but for one circumstance. Members formed the uneconomic habit of sending their secretaries, batmen, valets, wives, mothers-in-law, office boys, attorneys, and literary agents to the club to buy cigarettes.

Like scotch, then, sales suddenly had to be restricted to members only, and then to a single hour in the day and to one package apiece—and you had to have not folding money, but the exact change ready besides. So the queue formed. And, as became men used to getting into places by press badge instead of by standing in line, it arranged itself sitting down.

By voiceless common consent the late Charles Stewart of the Central Press, known for his agile decrepitude as the Young Pretender, held first place regardless of where he sat. And Sir Willmott Lewis of the London *Times* held second as the club's most distinguished resident foreigner. But otherwise each chair and each divan sitting space in the club's large living lounge came to have its special number in relation to all the others. He who sat and remained in the big leather chair in a far corner was number twenty-eight when all stood up to buy, and none would challenge his senior position.

Curious developments followed which usually accompany emergencies. The National Geographic Society, for example, began outfitting expeditions to the National Press Club, an objective never before attempted save on club election days. Denizens of the cardroom who previously had been ignorant that the club comprised other apartments came groping into the lounge brushing spots from their eyes. Certain taproom elements who had

never been beyond that oasis were led to chairs in the line by guides. Then the war ended and cigarettes were flush again.

In that spring of 1945 was poured, too, the last pitcher of beer in an outstandingly successful entertainment enterprise—the National Press Club Canteen. The canteen grew out of unplanned incident. On a sodden late fall Saturday in 1942 some sailors from a visiting British craft, short on money and knowledge of how to have fun in town, were brought to the club by some hospitable members and encouraged to drink all the beer they could hold. They could hold a lot, and some drank even more.

The party was sufficiently a success so that by Christmastime bigger and better ones like it were a regular Saturday afternoon service, originated and sponsored by the National Press Club's American Legion Post. The club auditorium was pre-empted for the duration. Members were tapped for continuing contributions and enlisted in volunteer shifts of waiters. And all the GI's within cruising distance of Washington and of whatever Allied uniform were invited. Beer (but no hard liquors) in twenty-barrel geysers per Saturday flowed, while hot dogs piled up in mountains and diminished. It all floated along with GI's shouted conversation on oceans of boogiewoogie noise furnished by military bands from the neighborhood and an occasional musical-show orchestra.

The attendance of the great—very much including visiting show choruses—was solicited, not to say commandeered, but under certain restrictions. No cabinet member, general, admiral, coordinator, agency head, Supreme Court justice, or Congressional celebrity could speak longer than two minutes, even if he was a visiting prime minister. The rule skipped only the show girls. They were at liberty to display their talents or whatever else they had as long as the boys wanted it. None of them ever seemed to be interested in public speaking anyhow. On one peak day the whole Supreme Court of the United States was present except for one member, and at the superpeak all of Earl Carroll's Follies girls with no absentees of record.

Statisticians were never present, but at the best estimates of seven hundred GI's per Saturday on thirty Saturdays a year—

canteens were omitted in deference to the Washington summers—tens of thousands of “the kids” undoubtedly passed through the Press Club’s fiestas on their way to grimmer experiences.

Now and then a member covering a European battleground or some remote Pacific beachhead was made aware of this when some GI sidled up to him and asked, “Say, Mack, they still got those canteens running back there in that Press Club?”

Maybe this is what made Charley Michie of the lately doomed newspaper *PM* call the canteen “the burp heard round the world.”

There isn’t much else to say. In the National Press Club we mourned our dead: Ray Clapper, Ernie Pyle, and Ben Robertson, also (and we knew why) mourned by the public, and some others who were close chiefly to ourselves. A man was mourned, too, whose body came back on a glowing April Friday from Warm Springs, Georgia, to Washington. And next day his coffin, looking curiously small against the bulk of its gun caisson, moved through the city’s still streets to the Union Station to entrain to its final resting place at his beloved Hyde Park. Many loved him, though not everyone, and some still manage to hate. But he was mourned, amid the corn, in some memorable newspaper and radio prose.

Then the Japanese quit on a hot August day, and the town exploded in a celebration which nearly put a hole in the sky. From the bar and main dining-room windows of the Press Club awed members watched a task force of young Marines and their girl friends try to set fire to the Willard Hotel not once, but several times. Police protested, but did not arrest. There was celebration in the club, too, and morning found many a head heavy.

But the professional members had found time to handle two flashes and accompanying reading matter as an opening chapter of the peace and who won or lost it. They were the executive orders ending the rationing of gasoline and war manpower controls. Those were the beginning of the endless task of the members of the Washington Press to tell the story of after the war.

## Passed by Censor

BY GEORGE CREEL,

George Creel was Chairman of the Committee on Public Information during World War I. His career includes editorship of the *Kansas City Independent*, *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News*, special correspondence from Washington and the world at large for *Collier's* and other magazines. His books include *The War, The World and Wilson*, 1920, *The People Next Door* (on Mexico), 1926, and *War Criminals*, 1944.

BYRON PRICE,

Byron Price, a native of Indiana and a graduate of Wabash College, was news editor of the Associated Press bureau in Washington, 1922-27, bureau chief, 1927-37, and executive news editor of the entire organization, 1937-41. He was director of the government's Office of Censorship, 1941-45, and is now Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations.

ELMER DAVIS,

Elmer Davis, another native Hoosier, was director of the Office of War Information, 1942-45. A graduate of Franklin College and a former Rhodes scholar at Oxford, he has been a member of the *New York Times* editorial staff, 1914-24, news analyst of the Columbia Broadcasting System before the war and of the American Broadcasting Company since.

AND WILLIAM A. KINNEY

William A. Kinney started newspapering as an undergraduate in Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts, during the 1920s. He joined the Associated Press in 1931 and for two years was assigned to work on its published official history. He has been a news editor in the Washington bureau and a member of the staff of *World Report* magazine. He is now chief of the News Bulletin Service of the National Geographic Society.

*Many have been the uncomplimentary remarks about the climate of Washington. One kind thing that may be said, however, is that this climate hardly has been salubrious for censorship in the century and a half the city has been the capital of the United States.*

*Prime credit for this belongs, of course, to the Bill of Rights; but the record will show more than an occasional assist by the vigilance or ingenuity of the press corps.*

*The only effective government ventures in press censorship to date have been under the stress of two world wars, with their overriding threat to national security. In each instance official censorship existed only for the duration. In each instance it was voluntary. And in each instance it was the genuine co-operation of the newspapers that made it effective.*

*Unofficial censorship, like the poor, probably will always be with us. In the last analysis every reporter or editor perforce is a censor. He must decide what facts to present, what facts to omit. Rare is the news story, though it run columns, that exhausts all information on a given subject. However, unofficial censorship never has been effective, whether exercised by individual correspondent or some presuming government bureau.*

*Even in the worst days of the partisan press, when news was shamelessly colored and distorted, there were always enough reporters in rival political camps to confound the best efforts to*

*suppress tidings politically distasteful to those in the saddle. Through the years it has been much the same story with those federal officials who have contrived at imposing covert little censorship systems of their own; no one ever has got away with it for long.*

*Object lessons are many. Consider the case of William Tecumseh Sherman, Commanding General of the Army for a decade and a half after the War Between the States and a man embittered (not without reason) toward the press. When a punitive cavalry expedition against the Indians was about to set out in 1876 Sherman tried his official hand at blacking out newspaper coverage.*

*In a War Department wire he instructed the superior officer of the operation. "Advise Custer to be prudent, not to take along any newspaper men, who always make mischief."*

*With General George Armstrong Custer, however, that advice went in one ear and out the other. Dispatches on the progress of his Seventh Cavalry column came back regularly until the massacre at Little Big Horn. The lone civilian to go down in that slaughter was the newspaperman the insubordinate Custer took along from Bismarck, North Dakota.*

*Journalistic history is vague on just how censorship got its start in the world or who sired it. Alexander the Great has been credited with inventing postal censorship for his troops in the fourth century B.C. Much earlier, the Old Testament records, the death penalty was decreed for any herald who brought back news of defeat in battle.*

*By his present name the censor dates back to ancient Rome, where he began by doing business at an entirely different stand. The two-man office of censorship was created in 443 B.C., entrusted with the responsibility of presiding over the census. This involved not only the registration of citizens but also an estimate of the duties each individual owed to the state.*

*In time the scope of the office widened immeasurably. The censors directed the levying of taxes; they let contracts for repair of public buildings; they determined the composition of the Roman Senate; they propounded the moral code by which the*



populace should abide, and any flouting of their rules could cost a man his job and his right to vote. Thought control in a toga is not difficult to discern.

When Europe started to emerge from the Middle Ages the idea of censorship was quite firmly established—and generally accepted. Printed publications were subject to various strictures, all designed to prevent circulation of embarrassing facts or “disturbing” sentiments among the people. Books and plays required official licenses. Religious censorship wielded stern powers over matters adjudged in the ecclesiastical sphere—an elastic territory which frequently encompassed a lot of non-ecclesiastical acreage.

For the English-speaking world the first resounding blow against this devious system of curbs and hindrances was delivered in 1644 by the poet, John Milton. His *Areopagitica* thundered against the entire business of censoring and licensing the press and with eloquence denounced the tyrannical restrictions of Parliament.

It was a telling attack, but not until a half century later—1695 to be exact—did Britain achieve virtual freedom of the press. Other European countries were not so fortunate. Censorship in one form or other persisted, in many of them down to this day.

Britain, the record shows, displayed no missionary zeal in carrying the gospel of press freedom at once to the benighted. The circumscribed publishers and pamphleteers among His Majesty's subjects in the American Colonies can bear full witness to that. They had to wait for their liberation until a Revolution was fought and the United States came into being with a Constitution and Bill of Rights that guaranteed freedom of speech and of the press.

For a full century and more governmental censorship efforts hardly constituted a major problem for Washington correspondents or the nation's press.

True there was the Sedition Act which Congress produced in 1798 during the period of semibelligerent sparring with France, but the law was quickly jettisoned under the combined pressure of the newspapers and the electorate.

Some three score years later censorship of a sort appeared with the Civil War, but a sorry, inept, fumbling thing it was. Throughout the greater part of the conflict newspapers—North and South—served as excellent intelligence sources for the enemy—unconsciously most of the time and in all but a few cases with complete immunity. With blithe abandon front pages frequently telegraphed advance battle plans, troop dispositions, details of fortified works, strategic blows in the making. There were moments when things were reasonably close to a modern G-2's concept of paradise.

The efforts of Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, to establish an effective censorship system are historically noteworthy, though the results fell far short of the objectives. Much better than the most patriotic editor of his day he came to understand the importance of wartime security to the national interest.

It remained, however, for two world wars to bring home that idea to the Washington press corps and to persuade the country of its validity. But for handling the security problems raised by those two wars no true guide or precedent existed in American experience. Both conflicts were fought in an advancing era of mass communications, with complex economic factors often as vital as the strength of battalions.

The scheme of censorship the two wars produced had best be told by the three men intimately responsible for its functioning: the prodigious George Creel of World War I; the imperturbable, efficient Byron Price of World War II; and the oft maligned Elmer Davis, who waged an unsung battle against needless suppression of news by the military throughout the struggle with the Axis.

A provocative, dynamic personality, Creel is *sui generis*. As Chairman of the Committee on Public Information he was not only chief censor for a nation at war, but also its number one propagandist. In the latter role he once had one hundred and fifty thousand persons working for him—artists, speakers, writers, all fervently preaching the gospel of "Make the World Safe for Democracy" while the bands played "Over There," and Four-Minutemen sold Liberty Bonds.

*In perspective censorship consumed only a minor part of Creel's amazing wartime energies, and for it he required a very small administrative staff, drawn in the main from the ranks of Washington correspondents.*

*Like any censor Creel found at times that his lot was not a happy one. He exploded against the AP when a censorship slip-up let through the first news of the arrival of the first U. S. troops in France. Nor was this the only occasion he verbally flayed correspondents for dispatches which may yet be considered controversial. But such incidents as these made only occasional footnotes in the successful 1917-18 experiment in wartime censorship which Creel directed.*

—W. A. K.

#### OPEN SECRECY BY GEORGE CREEL

On the heels of President Wilson's War Message the Army and the Navy persuaded him to ask Congress for the enactment of a hard and fast press-censorship law. As we had come to a fairly close relationship by reason of my work for his re-election in 1916 I took the liberty of sending the President a detailed argument against the proposed legislation.

Aside from the enormous cost and the physical difficulties of enforcement I pointed out that for the first time in our history soldiers of the United States were sailing to fight in a foreign land, leaving families three thousand miles behind them. Nothing, therefore, was more important than to guard against any impairment of the people's confidence in the information given to them. Since they would be suspicious enough by virtue of natural anxieties, a censorship bill was bound to stir the fear that news was being suppressed or else slanted. Even if freedom of the press was abused, abuses were preferable to the deadening evil of autocratic control.

I also made the point that censorship laws, while protesting protection of military secrets as a sole objective, had a way of

slipping over into the field of opinion. "Information of value to the enemy" was an elastic phrase and could easily be stretched to cover the whole area of independent discussion. Nothing was more dangerous, for a democracy did not need less criticism in time of war, but *more*.

What I urged was a Committee on Public Information to make the fight for the "verdict of mankind," a vast publicity operation that would weld our own people into an understanding and determined whole, that would win the support of neutral nations by the presentation of facts, and that would carry America's message to the Central Powers.

Instead of a censorship law, with its irritations and confusions, I suggested a *voluntary* agreement that would make every newspaper in the land its own censor, putting it up to the patriotism and common sense of the individual editor to protect military information of tangible value to the enemy.

President Wilson saw fit to approve my statement, and on April 14, 1917, announced the creation of a Committee on Public Information with myself as civilian chairman and the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of the Navy as the other members. One meeting, however, disclosed the cumbersome nature of such a setup. From that time on until the end of the war I conferred personally with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels when occasion required and reported directly to the President.

Deciding on the concealments to be asked of the press was a tedious, tiresome business. As first presented by the generals and admirals the list contained a hundred or more requests for secrecy, and it was only after weeks of battling that the number was pared down to eighteen.

The next step was their submission to the National Press Club, and after sufficient time for proper study I called a meeting of the newspapermen and presented myself for questioning. The temper of the gathering, hostile at first, grew more friendly as understandings were reached, and at the end there was agreement that the plan merited a fair trial.

The eighteen requests, printed on a six-by-twelve-inch card,

were placed in the hands of every Washington correspondent and went to every city desk in the country. The secrecy desired had to do with troop movements; the location of bases; the sailing or arrival of warships, transports, and merchant vessels; information as to convoys; coast or antiaircraft defenses; the laying of mines or mine fields or of any harbor defenses; information with respect to government devices and experiments in war materials; the transportation of munitions; and everything relating to aviation schools, the production of air matériel, and the numbers and organization of the air division, etc. etc.

A foreword made it clear that the eighteen items represented the thought and advice of the Army and Navy technical advisers, and the closing paragraph read as follows: "These requests to the press are without larger authority than the necessities of the war-making branches. Their enforcement is a matter for the press itself."

With the press depended on to protect information of tangible value to the enemy it became an obligation to meet the legitimate demand for all war news that did not divulge military secrets. This was done by placing men in every department of government for the preparation and release of reports on America's war effort. Not the hundreds of "public-relations counselors" of World War II, but a few trained *reporters* recommended by the elders of the National Press Club. Four in the War Department, for example, three in the Navy, and one each in the War Trade Board, the War Industries Board, the Department of Justice, and so on down the line.

A difficult and delicate task it was, for both press and officials viewed the arrangement with distrust. Admirals and generals wanted an "iron curtain," and newspapermen feared that it meant "press-agenting" on a huge scale. White House orders took care of military objections, and the suspicions of the correspondents quieted when it was seen that we furnished facts without the least trace of color and bias. At no point, moreover, was there any attempt to prevent independent news-gathering or to interfere with individual contracts. What also helped was ultimate recognition of the value to the press of a machinery

that made daily delivery and equitable distribution of all official war news from just *one* center.

The Division of News also operated the voluntary censorship, interpreting the government's requests for secrecy. A twenty-four-hour service was maintained, and men on the reference desk advised as to whether the news item was or was not covered by the card. In no instance, however, were there direct orders, care being taken to explain that compliance or non-compliance was up to the individual. Washington correspondents, I am glad to testify, leaned over backward in their observance of the card's requests.

As far as the good faith of the press was concerned our "voluntary censorship" may be written down as a success. Newspapermen may well be proud of the record, for I can recall only two or three deliberate violations in the eighteen months of war. Unfortunately there was nothing that could be done about them. The committee itself was without authority to punish, and due to the lack of an enforceable code of ethics the press was equally powerless. Shyster lawyers can be disbarred, quack doctors can have their licenses revoked, and unworthy ministers can be unfrocked, but the newspaper profession had no method of dealing with black sheep.

What made the showing even more remarkable was that from first to last the press labored under the strain of constant and justifiable irritations. All went fairly well in Washington, where the committee was available for authoritative rulings, but out in the field all was chaos. A lieutenant would bar one paper from taking plane pictures and the next day a colonel would give the right to a rival sheet. The press was barred from printing shipping news, but the notices of arrivals and departures were posted in hotel lobbies. Naval construction was a top-drawer secret, but it was common for the number and cost of new battleships and cruisers to appear in the Congressional Record. Army officials in Chicago would kill a story to which Kansas City censors offered no objections. Reporters were commanded to ignore the construction of a great plane factory even while the Chamber of Commerce was giving a banquet in celebration of the project. Any

mention of troop movements was *verboden* to the press, although the people of towns crowded railroad stations to see their "boys" off.

The committee also suffered its bedevilments. Knowing that *something* was being kept from them, the public became convinced that a *great deal* was being hidden, thus opening the door to every variety of wild and disintegrating rumor. Now it would be that epidemics had broken out in the training camps, killing soldiers in such numbers that the bodies were being dumped into trenches without burial services. Then would come the whisper that a German submarine had slipped into New York harbor, sinking scores of ships, and that every morgue and hospital was filled with the dead and dying. Day after day such lies ate at the heart of America's morale.

Out of it all came my conclusion that the "voluntary censorship" was not only unworkable but *unnecessary*. To confirm the belief, however, I saw the openminded head of one of the Intelligence units and asked him if he honestly believed that the enemy relied on our press for information.

"Certainly not," he answered. "Speed in transmission is the essence, and it takes days, not hours, for newspapers to reach a neutral country in communication with the enemy."

"Then the employment of spies and the use of cables is plainly indicated?"

"Of course."

Going to the White House, I laid my case before President Wilson, and in July he issued an order subjecting all cable communications to rigid censorship. Press dispatches were not touched, but everything else was given a scrutiny that resulted in the detection and arrest of many enemy agents. In 1917, fortunately for us, the radio was not a problem.

With control of the cables in successful operation, I went to the President with the suggestion that the "voluntary censorship" of the press be discontinued. The needs of the day, I insisted, were confidence, enthusiasm, and service, and these needs could not be met fully until every citizen was given the feeling of partnership that came from frank statements concerning every phase of our war effort.

What wiser or more helpful than to let the people know what was being done with their enemy? To provide them with the assurance that the military program had not bogged down but was going ahead at full speed? Information, and detailed information, as to the progress of troop training, plane and ship construction, etc. was *good* news for Americans and *bad* news for the enemy. Common sense commanded that newspapers be given the green light. With an effective censorship of the cables and the mails, there was no reason why the flow of information to our people should not be full and free.

Of course there were some secrets that had to be guarded. War plans, new inventions, technical developments, et cetera, et cetera. But where was there any other answer than secrecy at the source? If such information came to the ears of a reporter, most certainly it could be learned by any spy worth his pay.

Going further, I pointed out that the atmosphere created by common knowledge of a press censorship, even in small degree, provided an ideal "culture" for the propagation of enemy rumor. A newspaper story had a responsible editor behind it, and if untrue could be denied and disproved. On the other hand the source of a rumor could not be traced and gathered momentum as it leaped from coast to coast.

The proposal to lift the "voluntary censorship" brought a scream of protest from the admirals and generals, and President Wilson viewed it with equal disfavor. While admitting that from 80 to 90 per cent of the press could be counted on for patriotism and intelligence, he held stubbornly to the view that some measure of control was necessary for a "lawless" 10 or 20 per cent. Thus it continued for the duration.

Even so after thirty-one years I am still convinced that my argument against it was sound.

\* \* \*

*Press censorship departed the Washington scene with the end of "The War To End Wars" in November 1918, only to return a little more than two tumultuous decades later for another Armageddon—bigger, more stupendous than ever.*



*The uneasy intervening years spawned a host of complexities that were to make World War I problems seem mere child's play. The most formidable factor was the amazing development of rapid communications. (Remember Creel's aside? "Fortunately for us, the radio was not a problem.") Economically, too, the nation's warmaking potential had become vastly more intricate, and the area of military security expanded many times over to accommodate the enormous advance of science and technology.*

*Add to all this the fact of Total War. And Total War on two fronts.*

*Confronted with such a situation, one of the soundest decisions to come out of the White House in those hectic days after Pearl Harbor was against trying to operate a combined censorship-propaganda agency on the 1917-18 pattern.*

*The Office of Censorship was to be just that and nothing more. Propaganda and some of the other civilian phases of psychological warfare were later checked to a separate instrumentality, the Office of War Information.*

*The choice of the man to head the Office of Censorship in World War II was as felicitous as the decision to limit its responsibilities. For Chief Censor President Roosevelt selected Byron Price, then Executive Editor of the Associated Press in New York. A newspaperman's newspaperman, Price possessed a rare combination of qualities almost made to order for the job. He was one of the best known and respected news executives in the country. Twenty-two years spent as a Washington correspondent had made him thoroughly familiar with government processes, politics, and red tape. And, perhaps the highest recommendation, he had a veteran newspaperman's innate mistrust of censorship.*

*As Chief Censor it fell his lot to "sit on" the most awesome news story since creation—the unleashing of atomic energy. In the course of safeguarding this secret until Hiroshima, Price found himself the first censor in history who had to worry about the content of wartime comic strips. There was always the danger that the wildly imaginative yet often prophetic strips of the Buck Rogers variety might spur thinking along atomic lines. No less a hero than Superman bowed to Price and meekly revised his ad-*

ventures when the advance script called for featuring cyclotrons too prominently.

Interestingly enough, ordinary citizens showed marked concern over the danger of security leaks via the funny pages long before atomic secrets became a censor's problem. They wrote in to volunteer their warnings. "Watch out," one patriot cautioned, "for tip-offs to the enemy in the comic strips!"

The Office of Censorship had its headaches, too, when the political overtones of censorable news seemed to drown out the security factors involved. Political partisanship never took a complete holiday during the war, but no one ever accused Price of being anyone's tool or cat's-paw.

Best index of the job done by Censorship is that it was one of those extremely rare war agencies that failed signally to achieve a Congressional investigation or even the kudos of a sustained attack. On the contrary it was occasionally embarrassed by praise.

Perhaps the most eloquent tribute went in the record as V-J Day neared. It came from the American Civil Liberties Union, normally hypersensitive to any suspicion of an infringement of Constitutional guarantees. "Censorship arising out of the war," the Union found, "has raised almost no issues in the United States." The Chief Censor's account may explain how his agency managed to incur that encomium.

—W. A. K.

#### SORRY—RESTRICTED BY BYRON PRICE

The story of press censorship during World War II is a tale of many places and many deadlines. Its pattern unfolded in countless city rooms and briefing rooms, on waterfronts and battlefronts, over the desks of frequently bewildered and sometimes exasperated military brass and publishing brass, and in sundry blacked-out corners. But the hub of all its activity was Washington, and the Washington correspondents were nearly always vividly in the foreground.

With the single exception of their colleagues in combat zones overseas the capital corps of newsmen felt most heavily the restraints of censorship. For nearly four years their lives and professional habits were invaded in a manner and to an extent which they themselves did not always realize. By the same token to them belongs a generous share of credit for whatever degree of success the undertaking attained.

To the naked eye of American newspaper initiative the War Years presented a strange outlook. Day-by-day editors made their news selections on the advice of government agents, and many times many potential first-page exclusives went the way of the wastebasket. Beginning gradually and almost gently while the country still drifted in the twilight preceding war, the era of abnormal behavior for newspapers came to full bloom soon after Pearl Harbor and continued until hostilities ended.

The first portents appeared in 1940, when more and more public officials began to speak only in whispers, enjoining reporters not to print all they knew. In early 1941 the Navy boldly asked for secrecy regarding the repair of British warships in American shipyards. The response was spotty, but in the main effective. Encouraged by the Navy's partial success, the Weather Bureau, the Maritime Commission, and other agencies set out to make requests of their own—taking into their own unco-ordinated hands, so to speak, a law which did not exist at all.

The reverberations in the National Press Club bar and adjoining areas were loud and discordant. Frustration was fed increasingly by bewilderment and confusion, even by outright anger. Just what did the government want, and where would it end?

The coming of actual war saw some of the confusion dissipated, but it must be said that much of the frustration and some of the sense of outrage persisted to the end of hostilities. There was also no lack of ribaldry sometimes at the helplessness of censors without a legal leg to stand on, trying to keep their balance between a hungry press and the threatening interdictions of the more short-sighted among the military.

Of course that was one of the inescapable trials of a voluntary

censorship, which was the only kind anyone wanted—barring some of the military authorities.

Congress legalized censorship of international mail and cables after Pearl Harbor, but neither the President nor any member of Congress proposed to include the domestic press. The only existing statute which might apply was the old Espionage Act, but that had been drafted to catch spies, and proof of malicious intent was required for conviction. In essence there was no legal basis for restraints on the press.

Mr. Roosevelt's answer to the dilemma was the creation on December 19, 1941, of an Office of Censorship. Departing widely from the pattern of World War I, he placed upon this single agency two sorts of responsibilities. He instructed it to censor mail and cables entering and leaving the country and also to seek the voluntary co-operation of press and radio to withhold valuable information from the enemy.

It was the first of these responsibilities which absorbed the major resources of the Office of Censorship and involved recruitment of fourteen thousand mail and cable censors.

But it was the second responsibility which carried the dynamite. In any democratic country the press censor's house can be builded only on sand. He can rely only on the shifting possibilities of mutual understanding; no barrier to free expression will be tolerated by free people if they believe it imposes senseless restraints.

From the practical viewpoint, also, co-operation of the press lay at the very heart of the entire censorship process. No matter how many thousands or millions of censors might be stationed on the borders, they never would seal off communication completely. Friendly nations still must be given the courtesy of the diplomatic pouch. Travelers must pass if the business of war is to be expedited, and every traveler carries information in his head. The only safe way to curtail information for the enemy is to keep it out of circulation at home.

Immediately it came into being, the Office of Censorship set about drafting a code designed to draw together and classify the categories of information which in the interest of national security ought not to be published in wartime. It appealed to the press to

observe this code, and it assembled a small staff of experienced newspapermen (there never were more than a dozen on the rolls at any one time) to answer questions in borderline cases. They were never to object to editorial opinion or criticism. They were to work only with facts, facts, facts, seeking eternally the one objective of keeping dangerous information from the enemy.

This all sounds very simple, but in practice many complications arose. The making of the code in that hectic Christmastide of 1941 was in itself a feverish exercise in rope walking. Departments and bureaus, military and civilian, asked for far more restrictions than any effective traffic could possibly bear. Negotiation and drafting was largely the handiwork of John Sorrells, executive editor of the Scripps-Howard newspapers, who was borrowed to take over as the first Chief of the Press Division. The task he undertook required all the brilliant craftsmanship, diplomacy, and downright courage which had brought him to the very top of the newspaper profession.

The real point about the code, as every newspaperman knew, was that it would be completely useless unless backed by mutual confidence. It came to have meaning not by reason of its promulgation by the government, but only because the overwhelming majority of the press accepted it as reasonable and workable. It retained significance only because that attitude of the press did not change during the entire period of the war.

The operation admittedly was far from perfect. For one thing a basic tenet was that the Office of Censorship would not censor the government, that if a qualified "appropriate authority" disclosed information for publication censorship would not object. However sound that thesis may have been, it led to many complications. Sometimes it was possible, for example, for enterprising correspondents to induce a congressman to sponsor a story otherwise in violation of the code—a circumstance which led Jim Wright, Washington correspondent for the Buffalo *Evening News*, to remark on "the 531 holes in the code." But actual abuses of that kind were few indeed.

For a time many newsmen were confused by the relative functions of the Office of Censorship and the information services of

the government, eventually herded under the wing of Elmer Davis's Office of War Information. Actually the two agencies were as separate as were the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Fisheries. Each did what its name indicated, and any threat of conflict was dissipated by a signed agreement that the Office of War Information would do no censoring and the Office of Censorship would not meddle with the government's information programs.

Nearly all of those who served in the Press Division were on leave from private newspaper or magazine employment—requisitioned for brief or long periods to help win the war. After Sorrells the Division was headed successively by Nathaniel R. Howard, editor of the *Cleveland News* and formerly secretary of the American Society of Newspaper Editors; Jack Lockhart, managing editor of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; and finally Theodore F. Koop, a seasoned AP man who had been directing the information service of the National Geographic Society. To William H. Mylander, erstwhile Washington correspondent for the *Toledo Blade* and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and James E. Warner, then Washington correspondent for the *Providence Journal* (now of the *New York Herald Tribune* capital staff), fell the major task of clearing stories of the Washington correspondents and defending the agency when it was ribbed over the Press Club luncheon tables.

In all an even twenty pulled their weight in the boat at one time or another, the others being William P. Steven, managing editor of the *Tulsa Tribune*; Kingsley Rice of the Technical Publishing Company, Chicago; Frank P. Tighe, managing editor of *Automotive Industry*; W. Holden ("Mike") White, publisher of *Your Garden* magazine; Frank C. Clough, managing editor of William Allen White's *Emporia Gazette*; Charles R. Corbin, managing editor of the *Toledo Blade*; James Pope, managing editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*; A. Milburn Petty, Washington correspondent for *National Petroleum News*; Joe Alex Morris, foreign news editor of the United Press Associations; Philip D. Adler, editor and publisher of the Kewanee (Illinois) *Sun-Courier*; Arthur E. King, managing editor of the *Winston-Salem* (North

Carolina) *Journal*; William H. Walsh, city editor of the Springfield (Massachusetts) *Republican*; Day Thorpe, editor of the Bethesda (Maryland) *Journal*; and J. Philip Buskirk, an authority on technical and scientific data.

One special distinction was enjoyed by this aggregation of amateur and unorthodox bureaucrats. In the nature of things they had to be a court which acted without the customary law's delay. Early in the war Lockhart established something like a world's record for celerity in burning up red tape. By long-distance telephone he cleared a story sentence by sentence for a managing editor who was just on his deadline and was feeding copy to the composing room in five-line takes. And between them they made the deadline.

Naturally newspaper acceptance of the code was not always enthusiastically unanimous. Sometimes—as in the case of the atomic bomb and the timing of the Soviet declaration of war on Japan—the disagreements arose because censorship could not disclose its reasons without destroying the security it was trying to protect. Sometimes disputes were due to plain and honest difference of opinion as to what information would help the enemy and what would not.

When in the Congressional campaign year 1942 the President decided to visit war plants across the continent the protest against secrecy reached worrisome proportions. Protection of the Presidential travels had always been an accepted part of the code. This time there might be political implications, and a substantial group of respected Washington correspondents objected. But while they argued they kept the secret until the trip was over and the news officially released. The general sentiment of the press did not appear to support the protest, and the code stood.

It was just as well. A little later the President again left Washington, this time for Casablanca. Again as before editors were informed that he was taking a trip. Period. It worked, and Berlin learned about it all too late.

The story of the atomic bomb, as seen by the censors in all its stages, is far too long to relate here. One early chapter was something of a classic. Editors were asked to be cautious about stories

involving certain minerals in the atomic table and their compounds, including several having no connection with the bomb and "a few phonies" which the resourceful and imaginative Nat Howard said later he threw in gratuitously for the admonitory note to editors "just to confuse the enemy."

It may still surprise some correspondents to know that the long trail reached its news climax not on the day of Hiroshima, but three weeks earlier on July 16, 1945.

That was the day of the first test in New Mexico. Anxious War Department officials pressed beforehand for complete secrecy, but the censors made no promises, being uncertain of the possibilities. Actually the explosion was so powerful that mildly alarming dispatches soon began to come into Washington, and the War Department was advised to make an announcement to dampen curiosity. It announced that there had been "an explosion of munitions"—the literal, exact truth, but undoubtedly the greatest understatement in the whole history of press handouts.

The result was that many important newspapers were satisfied and printed nothing at all about an event which may be regarded as one of the great news developments of all time—an atom had performed as directed, and incalculable changes were in prospect in warfare, in industry, in the daily life of the human race.

All of the operations of the Office of Censorship were ended within twenty-four hours of the surrender of Japan under a plan recommended by the agency itself and approved by President Truman in advance.

Of course there had been mistakes both in and out of the government, but unquestionably a vast amount of valuable information had been kept from enemy listeners. Neither the first landing in Africa in November 1942, nor D-Day for Normandy in June 1944, nor the development of The Bomb, nor any other major military project had been disclosed prematurely. In no single case was evidence produced that any newspaper or magazine had violated deliberately any request of the Office of Censorship. And in the end the press emerged as free as it had been before.

Yet the whole experience of World War II censorship can only



engender a fervent hope that it will never have to be repeated. Like all of the other inevitable dislocations of war, even voluntary censorship leaves scars behind. For several days after the end of censorship operations had been announced stories continued to arrive "for clearance."

One young reporter who had known no other way of life in Washington was almost in despair when told that the code really was abolished and the censors gone. His confusion was touched with a plaintive helplessness. "But if you people won't clear this for me, who will? I simply must find someone."

No one who loves liberty can miss the point of that.

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*The Washington story of censorship in World War II does not end with the activities of the Office of Censorship. The Office of War Information operated in the same field for most of the duration, but working the opposite side of the street, as it were.*

*Censorship's job was essentially negative; it was to see that the enemy did not obtain information that would be damaging to the Allied cause. OWI had a positive mission to perform: it was to see that the people both at home and abroad did receive such information and propaganda as would be damaging to the enemy's cause or beneficial to the Allied war effort.*

*OWI took some time to evolve as a war agency, so it did not appear on the capital scene until several months after the Office of Censorship. To direct its operations (a thankless assignment, it proved) the President called in Elmer Davis, a Hoosier like Price and one of the nation's top radio news commentators.*

*There is quite a widespread tendency to classify OWI as purely a propaganda agency. Actually an important, but virtually unsung, chapter in its turbulent career was the tenacious battle it waged under Davis to pry loose legitimate news from the stranglehold of the military, who more often than not took a "you can't print that" attitude toward virtually everything.*

*Stringent precautions to protect vital military information are, of course, imperative for a nation at war, but the armed forces'*

concept of just what was vital could extend at times to include the kitchen sink. This was no new development; it is an occupational disorder. When Lee was pushing toward Gettysburg in 1863 Union censors in Washington sought to suppress the news that the Confederate columns were riding into Pennsylvania. As if Lee did not know where he was or where he was going!

In World War II the armed forces began with three categories of classified (i.e. unpublishable) military information. In ascending order these were: Restricted, Confidential, and Secret. For a conflict so titanic, however, the three classifications evidently proved militarily inadequate; hence in the best tradition of the American zest for superlatives someone invented Top Secret. The zeal for security produced some strange contradictions. A minor officer, obtaining leave to get married, found his leave orders stamped "Restricted," but no objections were raised to the newspaper accounts of the nuptials of the "classified" groom and the "non-classified" bride. Imagine the possibilities for confusion when the subject matter became more strictly military in character.

It was against this unpredictable windmill of military security that Davis had to joust throughout all but a few months of the war. It was a long campaign, waged day in and day out. No one perhaps can estimate with reasonable accuracy the amount of legitimate information which OWI succeeded in extorting from the reluctant censorship dragons in the armed forces who otherwise never would have made the news public.

The battles started early after OWI's creation and continued later than you think. It was a tough fight prying loose from Navy some vague details of the Savo Island disaster in the Solomons a few months after OWI was born, and the fight remained tough most of the way. The swelling tide of Allied victories may have made things somewhat easier toward the end, but one never could relax. As late as December 1944, SHAEF sought to black out coverage of the Battle of the Bulge. And even after V-E Day the military censors tried (with a singular lack of success) to veto publication of dispatches on the post-surrender wave of sinkings by die-hard U-boat captains. The grounds were that the news would furnish "information to the (surrendered) enemy!"

*The fight against needless and harmful censorship was only one of the multiple efforts of OWI under Davis, but certainly the most significant in the broad view of the Washington press corps. There can be no minimizing, however, the importance of the informational and propaganda missions which OWI discharged.*

*Director Davis, until now, has never spoken out on the problems he faced. When he stepped out at the war's end his final report to President Truman was innocuous and perfunctory. Given the perspective of several years plus the threat that war may come again, he writes for the first time on what his headaches were and what advice he would give to a successor, should that dire and sorry day again come upon the nation.*

—W. A. K.

## WAR OF WORDS BY ELMER DAVIS

Byron Price and I had plenty of headaches during our government service, but for one thing each of us was always grateful—that he didn't have the other's job as well as his own. The complete separation of information and censorship was one of the soundest administrative decisions of wartime. Indeed the government was reluctant to set up an information agency at all; censorship was begun almost at once after the outbreak of war, but it was six months before a comprehensive information organization was established. By that time many things had been done that could not be undone.

There were four government information organizations in existence on Pearl Harbor day beside the information offices of the individual departments, but most of them were specialized. Robert W. Sherwood's Foreign Information Service operated under the direction of Major General William J. Donovan and in Donovan's opinion was an adjunct to his para-military activities, which later became the Office of Strategic Services. Lowell Mellett's long-standing Office of Government Reports was largely concerned with finding out what people were thinking about. Bob Horton's

Information Division of the Office for Emergency Management was a very efficient operation, but in a limited field. Archibald MacLeish's Office of Facts and Figures had assembled some good men and produced some good ideas, but lacked authority to get anything done about them.

In June 1942 these four were combined into the Office of War Information. But by that time they had had time to acquire a certain jealousy of one another, especially as there was some duplication in their work. So when I took over the four and had to try to weld them into one I sometimes felt like a man who had married a four-time widow and was trying to raise her children by all her previous husbands.

I think OWI did on the whole a pretty good job, though far short of perfection, but I am not concerned to argue that point with those who disagree. It may be more pertinent to mention some of our operating problems, for somebody who reads this book is likely to be stuck with the same job next time, if there is a next time. I assure that unfortunate that I shall regard him with sympathy and shall restrain any impulse to sit there comfortably in a grandstand seat and yell, "Take him out!"

Creel points with pride to the fact that he put his men in every department to write and release news of the war effort—not public-relations counselors, he says, but trained reporters. He could do that because there was nobody there already; practically speaking, departmental information began with him. But by 1942 every government department had long had its regular information staff (most of them trained reporters). OWI was directed to lay down policies that they must follow. But they had been there before OWI was established, and they knew they would still be there after OWI was gone. Naturally it was often pretty hard to bring them into line, especially as a department head usually backed his own men in an argument. Our directives were supposed to be binding on all departments, but there was only one man in Washington who could make them bind. It was our job to make them stick without running to him all the time.

Most departmental news, and much war news, continued to be released at the departments. Some of our people dreamed of a

single United States Newsroom, where all war news would be released. Among the correspondents this would have been a great convenience to the small and one-man bureaus. But the wire services and the larger bureaus, with their specialists in the work of the major departments, wanted the news to continue to be released where a man who wanted background on the story would find it easy to reach the official who knew, and the department information staffs, of course, backed them up. It was eventually decided that way—perhaps the best decision in any case. But one factor in that decision was that by June 1942 it was impossible to find, or to commandeer, enough space in downtown Washington for a single all-inclusive newsroom. Since we decided that the headquarters of OWI must be close to the newsroom, that meant that we had to establish ourselves more than a mile off center in a place (the Social Security Building at Independence Avenue and 4th Street) hard to reach unless a man had specific business there; also that the OWI newsroom remained essentially Bob Horton's war-agencies newsroom, with some amplifications.

The chief cause of the public clamor that led to the establishment of a single government information agency was the conflict and confusion in official statements, which so bewildered the public in the spring of 1942. (The classic instance was the dispute between the Army and the Navy as to whether there had or had not been an air raid on Los Angeles.) We were directed to end the conflict and confusion in talk in so far as it did not reflect a continuing conflict and confusion in policy. When the policy was still unsettled there was nothing we could do about it except to tell a man he could say nothing. But he could always say it anyway if he felt it strongly enough, for our direct authority extended only to formal releases. We had neither the authority nor the desire to interfere with what an official said to a reporter or a gathering of reporters (though we often felt he had been a fool to say it), so any man could always make an end run around our directives by a press conference with planted questions. I am surprised that that didn't happen even oftener than it did. We often found that men who were told that they had to tell a coherent story if they said anything in a formal release would actu-

ally get together and iron out their disagreements, but we never managed to get a general coherence in statements till Jimmy Byrnes went in as Director of War Mobilization and began to get some coherence in policy.

Our clearance-and-co-ordination procedure was attacked from another direction; it was said that by trying to make people get together and agree what they were going to do and what they would say about it we were spoiling some good stories (or, as it was usually phrased, suppressing legitimate differences of opinion). I don't know the answer to that one. You can have either clearance and co-ordination or conflict and confusion; one makes a better war effort, the other makes better headlines. Take your choice. One unquestionably valid criticism of our clearance procedure was that it delayed news. One department might be itching to go with its version of a story that we had to hold up till other departments legitimately involved could agree on what should be done and said about it. This was a variant of the familiar choice between prompt news and accurate news, but occasionally the delays were unconscionable.

News of military operations before we came in had been scanty and often inaccurate; we expected trouble with the Army and Navy and had it. It took more than four months to establish the principle that on questions of security the services had to appeal from our decision, not we from theirs. After that news of military operations was on the whole satisfactory in quantity, quality, and promptitude. But most of it was released in the theaters; and once in a while we in OWI in Washington, knowing what had happened, had to point out that the theater communiqué fell far short of giving the news. We had, of course, no authority over a theater commander; in such cases we had to tell our story to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who passed it on to the theater commander—not always without dilution. We always got the news out, but it took time.

Our dealings were not merely with the press, but with the radio, magazines, motion pictures, and book publishers; but those aspects of our work are irrelevant to this discussion. The Overseas Branch of OWI—which eventually became nine tenths of the

whole operation in appropriations and personnel—may seem irrelevant, too, but it has some bearing on the domestic story. The decisive and compelling reason for putting domestic and foreign information under the same roof was this: often there came up a case in which the need of issuance of an official statement for information of the home public had to be balanced against the unfavorable propaganda effect which such a statement from an official source might create abroad. It was often argued by our overseas people concerned with propaganda that if this had to be said at least it need not be said yet, or said just that way. Such cases will arise in any war. In the late war they were always decided in favor of the immediate information of the American people, regardless of the effect elsewhere. But the decision can more easily be made in a single organization than if two organizations had to fight it out and finally refer the argument for settlement to an already overworked President.

In the next war, if such a calamity should befall us, it will not be done that way. When the late war, sometimes inaccurately termed World War II (by my computation it is the eighth world war in which Americans have been engaged, though I see that an eminent historian calls it the ninth)—when that was drawing to a close we in OWI concluded that continuation of the foreign-information service was necessary in the national interest. Some thought it should be set up as an independent agency, but most of us held that it would be safer against abolition by Congress if it were in the State Department (which in any case would lay down its policies). This turned out to be correct. Even the personal intervention of General Marshall barely saved it from destruction at the hands of Representative John Taber of New York, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee; an independent agency would have had no chance at all.

Now its future is secure, but it is in the State Department and will probably remain there. So in a future war the argument as to the domestic necessity as against the foreign undesirability of the release of any particular piece of government information will have to be fought out between the State Department and some-

body else, and I only hope they can settle it between them without having to refer it to the White House.

For there will be a somebody else in the next war (if any), a domestic Office of War Information, because the conflicts and confusions that are endurable and indeed often useful in peacetime are a serious handicap to a war effort. In my judgment, however, no Office of War Information will be set up the next time until experience has once more proved that it is necessary—that is to say, some months after war breaks out—and I only hope that not too many localized false starts will have been made in the meantime. When it comes it might better be set up in a different way—under the direction of the White House Press Secretary, who can delegate his White House functions to an assistant if need be.

There are two reasons for this. In the first place the principal statements of national policy on the home front and the principal material for American propaganda abroad will always—in wartime—be what the President says in speeches or at news conferences. The national information program should be tied in as closely as possible with what he says, and, since that means that its operators should know beforehand what he is going to say, this can most easily be done if the director of the information program is also the man who advises the President on his statements.

Furthermore, since an Office of War Information will be more effective if it is clearly an extension of the President's voice, its director should be a trained newsman who has the personal as well as the official confidence of the President. But if such a man exists—and this has not always been the case—he will probably already be working as the White House Press Secretary and he might as well combine the two jobs. The division of functions made no trouble the last time because we always had excellent relations with Steve Early, but it could make trouble with a different kind of man.

Any other advice for my possible successor? Well, this may seem trivial, but it isn't; he had better not take the job unless they can assure him as much space as he needs downtown where people can get at him. Beyond that it should be clearly understood from the beginning—not after four months' argument—that he has com-



plete jurisdiction over the release of military news, subject, of course, to the right of appeal to the President by the chiefs of the armed services if they think security is endangered. (Experience shows that they will seldom if ever exercise that right after the burden of appeal is put on them.) And the tighter the President's control over all departmental information, the more likely we shall be to get information for the public which will both be strictly accurate and will promote the prosecution of the war.

Which after all is the only reason for having an Office of War Information.

# The Diplomatic Correspondent

BY WALLACE R. DEUEL

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World politics are as different from domestic politics as mayhem is different from mumbledepeg. World politics are indeed a form of mayhem. They are not a game, as domestic politics have been fondly held to be. They are an unrelenting and implacable struggle for the survival of the fittest, and only the fittest do survive.

No nation is exempted from this struggle. America cannot escape history any more than any other nation can. It cannot choose whether or not to play a great part in world politics, as Theodore Roosevelt said more than a generation ago; it can only choose whether to play its part well or meanly.

The American people have always known these facts of life, and in times of great crisis they have always acted correctly upon them, although on occasion they have acted only just barely in time. Between great crises, however, a good many Americans have preferred not to trouble themselves unduly about foreign affairs.

But the days when such indifference was possible have gone, quite possibly forever. This began to be apparent with the rise of Adolf Hitler, became reasonably clear with the fall of France, and grew all but inescapable with the realization that the Soviet Union was irrevocably committed to a policy which Secretary of State Dean Acheson has termed mildly enough, "imperialist and expansionist."

Now and indefinitely into the future America is committed to the ineluctable responsibilities of great power. Now and indefinitely into the future America will be the hero—or the villain, but in either event the leading person—of the drama of world politics. Now and indefinitely accordingly America is interested in world politics as never before.

As American participation and interest in world politics have increased, so has the demand for foreign-policy reporting from Washington. The nation's capital has indeed become the news capital of the whole world.

The American press has sought to satisfy the increased demand for foreign policy news in two principal ways. First, editors have called for more and more stories on world affairs from correspondents who were—and who have continued to be—responsible for covering national affairs as well. Thus something new has been added to the qualifications required of any and every well-rounded Washington correspondent: the ability to write about world politics as well as about politics at home.

But this "general practitioner" type of coverage has not satisfied all editors. It has not provided either the quantity or the quality which some papers have wanted and have felt they could afford. Foreign affairs have accordingly been more and more elevated in recent years to the status and dignity long enjoyed by antiques, chess, crossword puzzles, pets, and the new books—although not yet, of course, to the estate of sports or society. More and more editors have assigned men to the sole task of covering foreign-policy news in Washington. The past fifteen years have seen a great burgeoning of this species of the genus Washington Correspondent—the diplomatic, or foreign affairs, correspondent.

The diplomatic correspondent covers the formulation and conduct from Washington of American foreign policy. He may appear at sessions of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly and at the more sinister and significant international conferences. He may make occasional grand tours *in partibus infidelibus*. His headquarters and his habitat are, however, in the District of Columbia and its geographical, official, and social environs.

Ideally a diplomatic correspondent should have the qualifications both of a good diplomatist and of a good reporter. He should know a good deal about the world—including above all his own country—and about world politics. He should know about the past as well as about the present, or he won't know much about the future, and it is part of his job to know that too.

The good diplomatic correspondent should know much about diplomacy, and he should know and be well and favorably known by a good many diplomatists. Preferably he should speak at least one or two of the other world languages in addition to English. Fairly extensive experience as a foreign correspondent is an enormous advantage to a diplomatic correspondent. This is by no means an essential qualification, however. It can indeed be a disadvantage if, because it is too prolonged, it results in ignorance of the United States and of the ways things are done in this country.

A diplomatic correspondent nowadays should if possible have at least a rudimentary awareness of such subjects as economics, armaments, atomics, nutrition, public health, and all the other complex technological subjects which now figure so prominently in world affairs.

Most of the best diplomatic correspondents have had most of these qualifications. So conspicuously indeed is this the case that during many periods, if not most, the half-dozen or even dozen senior diplomatic correspondents in Washington have known a great deal more about foreign affairs than have the half-dozen or dozen highest-ranking officials in the State Department and the nation's leading ambassadors abroad. These officials are apt to be successful politicians or contributors to campaign funds of successful parties or at best "broad-gauge outsiders" with a "fresh approach," and any special expert knowledge of world politics they may possess is liable to be purely coincidental.

Finally—and this is an absolutely prerequisite qualification—the diplomatic correspondent must be able to write stories that make sense to his average reader.

Some editors are loath to hire diplomatic correspondents, and it is perhaps no wonder that this is so. For one thing men with

the necessary qualifications for the job are expensive, as newspaper salaries go. For another thing the idea has gotten around—not without help from some of the diplomatic correspondents themselves—that the practitioner of this branch of the profession is a gilded and even glittering creature who toils not, neither does he spin, and who lives and works (or does not work) like an oriental pasha. Striped pants and full evening dress must be the diplomatic correspondent's commonest garb, according to this legend, and champagne and caviar his diet. His habits are social, nocturnal, and languorous, it is firmly believed, and his respect for his employers and their wishes inadequate in the extreme.

It is true that there is a good deal of dressing up and dining out in diplomacy and that fine feathers sometimes do indeed seem to make fine diplomatists. "Diplomacy is a round of protocol and purgatives," said General Vergny, and this is still in some measure the case. Yet even when snuffbox and silk-knee-breeches diplomacy was in its finest flower diplomatic correspondents didn't have to wear the same clothes or put themselves in the same postures as the diplomatists themselves. They could do so if they wanted to, of course, and some did—by contagion or to provide themselves with protective coloration or conceivably to give themselves airs. But this was always a matter of preference, not of necessity.

Especially since World War II, moreover, diplomacy has greatly changed. It is no longer, if it ever was, virtually the sole prerogative of gentlemanly dilettantes who had leisure and luxury because they came from fine old families and had fine old bank accounts. Increasingly diplomatists may be trade unionists or college professors or professional revolutionists, rather than gentlemen of the old school or retired bankers. Diplomacy's problems, furthermore, are vastly more numerous, more technical, more pressing, and more dangerous than they used to be. Even the diplomatists themselves have less time, less energy, and less inclination for society after a day's work than they formerly had. The diplomatic correspondent nowadays can accordingly operate admirably without a white tie or even a black one—although it is

preferable, of course, that he wear a tie of some kind while on duty.

But, while the diplomatic correspondent does not need to ape the night life of the diplomatist, he does need to adapt himself to the diplomatist's daytime habits of work. The nature of diplomacy conditions—when it does not indeed determine—the nature of the diplomatic correspondent's methods: his sources, his relationships with his sources, the material which he obtains from them, his manner of doing so, and the way in which he reports the material he obtains. Diplomacy conditions these methods, moreover, in ways which are by no means always agreeable by orthodox newspaper standards.

The good reporter is expected to write ascertainable and verifiable facts. He is expected to name the sources of his facts and to quote the sources in substantiation of any generalizations or summaries he himself puts into his stories. He is expected to confirm his facts so securely that they cannot be plausibly denied—least of all by the very sources from which he obtained them.

The good reporter is supposed to get his facts fast and file them fast. He is supposed to write them clearly, simply, and succinctly. He is supposed to make them as interesting and as exciting as he honestly can. He is supposed to eschew comment and interpretation of his own.

The nature of diplomacy and diplomatists often make it virtually impossible for the diplomatic correspondent to function in this way.

Diplomacy operates in a condition of international anarchy. There is no law in the true sense of the term among sovereign nations—no law, no policemen, no courts, no jails, and no electric chairs. In the struggle for survival, as Lenin said, it is in the long run if not always a question of "Who-Whom?" That is, "Who eats whom?" It is a question of "Eat or be eaten." And as Remy de Gourmont said of a somewhat similar case, "When it is a matter of not being eaten, all means are the right ones."

It may be an exaggeration to say that all means are the right ones in diplomacy, but, if so, it is not too great an exaggeration.

It is the fashion nowadays for diplomatists to say that the only good diplomacy is honest diplomacy. This pretension is in itself, however, of only relative truth, and the diplomatist who tried to act on it would have a short professional life and an unhappy one—and so would the reporter who believed it.

Candor is a luxury which diplomatists can seldom afford. It could hardly be otherwise. Too much is at stake. Truth is notoriously the first casualty in war, and equally all's fair in war, and diplomacy is the waging of war "by other means." Duplicity and deceptions are recognized and permissible practices of diplomacy, just as they are in other forms of combat. A diplomatist who unnecessarily told the truth and thereby revealed information whose disclosure harmed his country would be a poor diplomatist and indeed a poor patriot. Even the diplomatic correspondent's best friends among his sources will accordingly try to deceive him. They will do so in either one or both of two ways: by failing or refusing to tell him things which are true and by telling him things which are not true.

The official denial is perhaps the most common form in which the diplomatist's duplicity vis-à-vis the correspondent manifests itself.

Henry L. Stimson, when he was Secretary of State, once denied a story of mine in terms which contain all the classic elements of the diplomatic *dementi*.

"That story is absolutely and unqualifiedly false," Stimson said with much feeling. "It is a story which no American correspondent ever should have written and no American newspaper ever should have published. It is a story which will do nothing but harm."

In facts the story was absolutely and unqualifiedly true. Stimson himself privately admitted later that same day that this was the case. The story reported that while the Secretary of State was attending a disarmament conference in Geneva for which he was then about to depart he would try to rally support among the other delegations for American opposition to Japanese aggression in Manchuria. This had seemed so obvious as to be hardly worth writing a story about. It had been a dull day, however, a high

official in the Department who enjoyed Stimson's confidence had confirmed the story, and so I had written it.

Stimson's utterance has an impressive purity of form and logic if not of veracity. It is in a way the very model of an official denial.

The Secretary's logic is clear if the order of the three sentences of his statement is reversed. Stimson said that my story would do nothing but harm because he thought it would reveal and thereby frustrate one of his principal purposes in going to Geneva. Stimson wished to conceal this purpose, and he thought others would not discern it in time to take action against it. Since the story would do harm in this sense to an American Secretary of State's labors, no patriotic American should have written or published it in Stimson's logic. And finally, since the truth would do harm, the Secretary had argued to himself that he was justified in saying that the story was absolutely and unqualifiedly false.

Obviously a diplomatic correspondent is not the only kind of a reporter whose sources lie to him. But lying is accepted and practiced in diplomacy on an enormously greater scale than in most other affairs and by otherwise honorable men who would never dream of such terminological inexactitude under most other circumstances. Duplicity is the rule in diplomacy rather than the exception.

Diplomatic discretion causes complications in a reporter's life, too, as well as diplomatic duplicity. Even when a source tells a correspondent a useful truth he is apt to tie more strings on it than the Lilliputians tied on Gulliver.

The diplomatist speaks for his government and his country, and he therefore cannot speak lightly—when he can speak at all. He dotes on the off-the-record statement and on the utterance that must not be attributed to him or to any official or even "authoritative" source.

This, of course, is anathema to the reporter and perhaps even greater anathema to his editor. In the Kingdom of Heaven sources will always accept full responsibility for what they say. But in the kingdoms of the earth the diplomatists are seldom willing to do this. The reporter frequently has but one choice: to



accept information on the odious conditions stipulated by the diplomatist or to get so little information that he must seek other employment.

The reporter, moreover, will seldom get valuable information from diplomatic sources by telephone. The line is too apt in the diplomatist's experience to be tapped, and, even if it is not, it is too insecure a channel of communication.

Diplomatic discretion is a principal cause of one of the most harrowing occupational hazards of the reporter. This is diplomatic language, "that guarded understatement which enables diplomats and ministers to say sharp things to each other without becoming provocative or impolite," as Harold Nicolson describes it in his book *Diplomacy*, "... a paper currency of conventionalized phrases in place of the hard coin of ordinary human converse."

"These phrases, affable though they may appear, possess a known currency value," says Nicolson. The reporter as well as the diplomatist must know what that value is.

A. A. Adeë, one of this country's great career diplomatists, once drafted a statement which is a classic example of the use of diplomatic language. The late Bertram D. Hulén told the story in his book *Inside the State Department*.

It was on the eve of the Spanish-American War. The ambassadors of all the great powers of that day—Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Italy—sent word that they wished to call on President McKinley to make a joint plea for peace in behalf of their governments. McKinley asked Adeë to prepare a statement for the ambassadors. Adeë scribbled out two sentences on the back of an envelope for the President. The first thanked the ambassadors for their good will. The second read as follows:

"The Government of the United States appreciates the humanitarian and disinterested character of the communication now made on behalf of the Powers named, and for its part is confident that equal appreciation will be shown for its own earnest and unselfish endeavors to fulfill a duty to humanity by ending a situation the indefinite prolongation of which has become insufferable."

What McKinley meant to say to the ambassadors was, of course, "No."

Diplomatic language poses two problems for the reporter: First, he must be sure that he understands the exact meaning the language is intended to convey; and, second, he must make that meaning clear to his readers—often without being able to quote a single passage which proves to the average reader that that particular meaning was in fact intended.

Still another quality of diplomacy and diplomatists which conditions the methods of the reporter is its—and their—remoteness from ordinary people and ordinary people's lives. Almost alone among the members of the professions the diplomatist has little or no direct personal concern with the man in the street.

Even the greatest merchant prince must please his customers. The lawyer must convince a jury. The doctor must make himself clear and credible to his patients, the teacher to his students, the newspaperman to his readers. The elective official must gratify the voters. But the diplomatist can thrive indefinitely like the green bay tree without convincing or cajoling a single layman. He deals mostly with other diplomatists—and less frequently with politicians—and need cope only with them. He is an expert whose affairs are transacted overwhelmingly with other experts. Most diplomatists are accordingly neither notably gifted nor notably eager in seeking to make themselves clear to the public.

More particularly most diplomatists understand little of the nature of news—and of newsmen. They do not understand that news is the most perishable of commodities and must be handled in hot haste. They do not understand that an editor confronted by an urgent news situation will not and cannot wait for a leisurely and well-thought-out disquisition which may be available tomorrow, but will and must print whatever it is he can get this afternoon or this morning.

The diplomatist, therefore, is apt to be inaccessible to reporters for several hours at a time, to move and speak slowly even when he is accessible, to mistime the release of information abominably, and in general to be his own worst enemy as well as that of the reporter in matters of public relations.

Thus it is clear that the diplomatic correspondent often cannot pay proper homage to the orthodoxies of his craft. He must frequently deal not with ascertainable and verifiable facts, but with trends and tendencies, with hints and insinuations and innuendoes. As often as not he is unable to name his sources or even to admit that he has any; he himself must accept full accountability for what he writes. He must find some of his biggest stories between the lines of what his sources say—or what they do not say—and not in the lines themselves. He must translate diplomatic language into words and sense and meanings that his readers can understand; even in public utterances he will not commonly find statements which he can quote to prove that his conclusions are justified. The diplomatic correspondent's sources will blandly—or indignantly—deny the very stories which they themselves have given him and will do so without hesitation or compunction, and the reporter will have no redress.

The reporter will not be able to move with the speed in this field with which he can move in others. Often he cannot use the telephone at all, but must go in his own proper person to see his source—and wait his turn in an overcrowded and inflexible schedule. The day when there is a crisis in Lusitania is the one day when it is all but impossible to see the officials who know about Lusitania; they are all locked in conference rooms, trying to resolve the crisis, and have left word they must not be disturbed.

Even when run to ground the officials will eye the reporter warily and askance. They are bedeviled by the difficulties, the delicacies, and the dangers of their problems; they would much prefer as a rule that the problems be reported in understatement of the case, if at all; and they know that the reporter will write them with brash and irreverent emphasis and that the editor will make the most excitement out of them that he feels he possibly can.

The diplomatic correspondent writes more exposition and less narration than do most other reporters. He must not write opinion and exhortation. If he does that he is not a reporter, but a columnist. But he must write a good deal of interpretation—or “analysis,” as the radio calls it.

"Any reasonably competent reporter can get more facts than he can use," the late John T. Whitaker once said of newspaper reporting abroad. "The trick is in knowing what the facts mean. We are paid for our judgment." The same thing is true of writing about foreign affairs at home.

A good diplomatic correspondent must almost say with Terence that nothing human is alien to him—because almost nothing human is alien to foreign affairs. A country's birthrate will determine its destiny in the long run. What happens daytimes on the production lines of a nation's industry has more influence on its world position than what happens on the receiving lines at an ambassador's evenings at home. A change in women's styles can change America's demand for half a dozen commodities in half a dozen other countries and therefore America's "diplomatic" relations with those countries.

For better or for worse, however, most editors do not consider things like these the proper prerogative of the diplomatic correspondent. Orthodoxy and cost accounting ordinarily confine the foreign-affairs reporter, like most others, to conventional and official news sources. There are three main categories of such sources for the diplomatic correspondent in Washington: foreign, American, and "mixed"—sometimes very mixed.

The "mixed" sources include such institutions as the United Nations, the International Bank and Fund, the Far Eastern Commission, and the Pan American Union. These and a sometimes bewildering number and variety of other international organizations yield some of the best copy produced by the diplomatic correspondent.

Foreign embassies and legations yield considerably more. A good many foreign diplomatists understand better than most of their American colleagues do that they need the press more than the press needs them, and they are accordingly more forthcoming with information than are the State Department and the American Foreign Service. In any news situation which concerns both the United States and another country—and by definition most of the situations that interest the diplomatic correspondent do—chances are at least even that the skilled and experienced American re-

porter will get more and better information from the foreign government than he will from his own. Many of the most spectacular and significant diplomatic dispatches written out of Washington are based on material which American diplomatists have tried to suppress, but foreign embassies and legations have made available.

This pains the State Department when it happens. American officials are sometimes inclined to think and even to say that it is unpatriotic on the part of a reporter to use such information. It is true that it can be dangerous for a correspondent to rely too predominantly on foreign sources. They will try to slant the news to suit their purposes, just as American sources will try to do the same thing to suit theirs. Obviously the reporter must know how to protect himself against this. He must know what America's interests are and what foreign governments' interests are and be sure he does not confuse them or serve another country's purposes against those of his own. A good diplomatic correspondent should be able to do this. When he succeeds he obtains honest news which he can obtain in no other way—a not necessarily unpatriotic pursuit.

But most diplomatic correspondents must rely on American sources for most of their news, because it takes much time, energy, and money to keep in touch with foreign embassies and legations, and most of the news that most editors want—and want fast—can best be obtained from American, not foreign, sources.

The Armed Forces, and particularly the Army, have played a major part in the making and carrying out of foreign policy in recent years not only in the occupied areas, but elsewhere as well, and the diplomatic correspondent will accordingly have the Pentagon as one of his principal ports of call. Economic factors are the very blood and bowels of world politics today—perhaps they always have been—and so the foreign affairs reporter will find news in the Department of Commerce, the Economic Cooperation Administration, the Treasury, and the Export-Import Bank among other sources. Rainfall and harvests make and unmake governments and their policies, and the diplomatic correspondent therefore must keep an eye on these, too, perhaps through the Depart-

ment of Agriculture. Developments in atomics can decide the issues of both peace and war, and the reporter cannot ignore these either.

The extradition or expulsion of an alien always involves at least one other country besides the United States and is therefore germane to the diplomatic correspondent's work. So is a speech by a prominent American labor leader before a foreign labor convention. So is a plan for an oil pipe line in Arabia or a campaign to raise funds for Israel. The foreign-affairs reporter's work may take him accordingly to a federal court, to CIO and AFL headquarters, to an oil company's offices or to a synagogue.

His work will take him most of all, however, to three other principal sources of news about foreign policy: the White House, the State Department, and the Senate—and most particularly the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, for, while the Executive Branch of the government proposes, the Senate disposes, most conspicuously in matters of foreign relations.

The greatest of these is the State Department. It is by all odds the most important single source of most foreign-policy reporting in Washington—so good a source indeed that no single reporter can possibly cover all the news to be found there.

When the Department was established under its first Secretary, Thomas Jefferson, its entire staff consisted of five clerks. The nation's foreign office, moreover, grew slowly. In 1838 Washington newspapers reported with satisfaction that the Department's personnel had multiplied tenfold, but this still only brought the total to fifty. For almost a century the Department expanded at an almost glacial rate—and moved with equal deliberation in other respects as well, unkind persons have said.

During and after World War II, however, the Department grew with all but explosive force and to what seemed at the time like Brobdingnagian proportions. At its point of greatest expansion just after the war 9,337 persons worked for the Department in this country—mostly in Washington and New York—and 14,276 more served abroad. A good many of these were personnel of temporary war agencies taken over by the Department, and their numbers have since been reduced by the processes of administra-

tive digestion and elimination, but in 1949 the Department still had 7,892 persons working for it in the United States and 12,597 in other countries.

The scope of the Department's operations had grown so greatly that it needed a twenty-eight-position telephone switchboard with four thousand lines. It spent fifteen thousand dollars in 1949 on the upkeep of a fleet of automobiles and trucks required to transport Departmental personnel and chattels from place to place in the District. It had two hundred and twenty-one employees in its communications units alone, and thirty-two were needed merely to issue travel orders and reservations to its officials and clerical, administrative, and fiscal workers.

The State Department has grown vastly more complex as well as vastly greater. It has needed since the war assistant secretaries, or officers of equivalent rank, for such purposes as propaganda, research and intelligence, administration and security, economics, United Nations and social affairs, occupied areas, and transport and communications as well as for old-fashioned "diplomatic" business.

As the Department has grown in size and complexity so has the task of the diplomatic correspondent who must cover it. The foreign-affairs reporter now has at least six principal ways and means by which he can and must try to keep up with developments in the Department.

First, he will have as many individual talks with as many individual officials as he possibly can, from the Secretary of State on down into the lower depths of the Department's hierarchy. During the first postwar years the diplomatic correspondent sought out one official in particular with especial zeal: Charles E. Bohlen, the Departmental Counselor and one of its principal Russian experts. With the exception of Joseph Stalin, Bohlen is the only living person who sat in on all the conferences of Big Three chiefs of government and foreign ministers during the war and continued to do so thereafter. He served as interpreter and adviser at these and other conferences and in Washington to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman and to Secretaries Hull, Stettinius, Byrnes, Marshall, and Acheson. Secretary of State Byrnes designated Boh-

len principal "official-unofficial" high policy spokesman, and he continued to serve in this capacity as in others until he was appointed minister in Paris in mid 1949.

Second, some Secretaries of State from time to time have had informal, background, and off-the-record talks with groups of twelve to twenty of the senior American diplomatic correspondents.

Third, the Secretaries' open press conferences provide much major news.

Then there are the three great services performed by the office of the "Special Assistant to the Secretary for Press Relations"—the redoubtable and immortal Michael J. McDermott: the answering of uncounted inquiries round the clock, the giving out of the Department's printed and mimeographed releases, and the conducting of a daily news conference. McDermott and his principal assistant, Lincoln White, also arrange special press conferences with departmental experts on particularly urgent problems from time to time.

News and other information of a different sort also issue from the Department's Office of Public Affairs. Most of this material is, however, intended not for daily-newspaper use, but for magazines and for clubs and other organizations especially interested in foreign affairs.

There are two other important—and "unofficial"—sources of news, background, and interpretation for the reporter who covers the formulation and conduct of American foreign policy—the meetings of the National Press Club and of Overseas Writers at which guests speak on world affairs.

The captains and the kings of the world address these gatherings, and much of what most of them say bears directly or indirectly on America's foreign relations. Presidents and former Presidents of the United States and other countries speak, and crowned heads, Secretaries of State and foreign and other cabinet ministers, field marshals and ambassadors and others of the great and near great. They speak when they are at the peak of their power, and they also speak when they are out of office and some of the glory may have departed from them—but they may speak



then more freely and informatively than before. Passionately anonymous officials of lesser rank also speak, officials of whom the great world has often never heard, but who sometimes know more about the facts of a case than do the captains and the kings and who sometimes speak more candidly, more completely, and more to the point than do their presumptive betters. Speakers at both clubs also usually answer questions from members after their set remarks.

Press Club speeches are usually on the record and for attribution and direct quotation.

Overseas Writers is an organization of Washington newspapermen who have had professional experience abroad and who now work in the capital for American-owned newspapers, press associations, and radio stations. Most guests who address Overseas Writers speak for background, and a few put their remarks off the record. Little of what is said at these meetings may be attributed to the speakers in any way or even to "an official source," but most of it can be written on the reporter's own responsibility, and virtually all of it is of invaluable help in judging day-by-day news developments which can be reported.

Every correspondent will develop his own combination of these sources and methods for the reporting of foreign-policy news. The "general practitioner" who must cover national as well as world affairs may find it difficult to keep intimately in touch with very many embassies and legations. He probably will not be able to have frequent and numerous individual talks with individual officials in the State Department. Perhaps he is not eligible for membership in Overseas Writers or is usually too busy to attend its luncheons. In many cases he will perhaps tend to rely primarily for his foreign-policy news on White House and State Department press conferences, on Congressional debates and other utterances, on the services of the indefatigable McDermott's office, and on the guest speakers at the Press Club.

Even the specialists—the diplomatic correspondents—have more different styles than pitchers do. One will rely in the first instance on foreign ambassadors and ministers, another on a favorite senator in the Committee on Foreign Relations, and still another on

wide acquaintance among officials in the State Department. Some foreign-affairs reporters find cocktail parties and the other rites and paraphernalia of Washington social life pleasant and profitable, and others flee these things as the devil is reputed to flee holy water.

The methods and sources of the individual correspondent depend partly on the kind of news his editors want and the speed with which they demand that it be filed and partly on the correspondent's own taste, temperament, background, experience—and, of course, on his salary and expense account.

As will be clear from this description of foreign-affairs reporting in Washington, the diplomatic correspondent is more like a foreign correspondent in some ways than he is like most reporters working in their own countries. In background, in qualifications, in interests, and in methods the diplomatic correspondent has much in common with an American correspondent serving abroad and with the correspondent of a foreign news-gathering organization serving in the United States. The diplomatic correspondent, like the foreign correspondent, is primarily interested in the foreign policy of the government he is covering. He concentrates his efforts on that government's foreign office and on the embassies and legations *auprès* that government. He finds the foreign office reluctant to tell him what it is doing, but he finds the embassies and legations at least as eager as he is to learn the same things he wants to learn and sometimes more than willing to exchange information and impressions with him.

There is, moreover, still another bond between the diplomatic and the foreign correspondents, for most diplomatic correspondents have served abroad, often in the countries from which the foreign correspondents come, and the two have covered some of the same conferences and other stories. They see eye to eye on a good many things. They speak the same language—often literally as well as figuratively.

Thus it not infrequently happens that American foreign-affairs reporters in Washington work more closely with foreign correspondents than they do with their American colleagues—and see more of them after office hours as well.

During and since the war conditions have conspired to keep the number of foreign correspondents in Washington below what it would be if editors abroad were free to send as many men to this country as they would like to send. News-gathering organizations in other countries have been disorganized and disrupted by the war and the reconstruction, as have other organizations. Hard times in general and an acute shortage of dollars in particular make it difficult for foreign newspapers and agencies to support bureaus in this country. German, Italian, and Japanese organizations suffer from these same disabilities and in even greater measure, and they also suffer under the moral obloquy and the legal servitude of "enemy character," which makes it doubly difficult for them to reestablish their positions in the capital.

Despite these inhibitions, however, there were more foreign correspondents in Washington in 1949 than there were just before the war, representing a larger number of employers of a larger number of different nationalities. The February 1949 *Congressional Directory* listed forty-seven correspondents representing thirty foreign organizations of fifteen nationalities as members of the congressional press galleries. The April 1939 *Directory* listed only twenty-two correspondents serving nineteen foreign employers of eight nationalities—which included German, Italian, and Japanese organizations. Twenty of the correspondents of foreign news-gathering organizations listed in 1949 were British; they represented eight employers, Reuter's agency, and seven newspapers.

Some of the "foreign correspondents" in Washington are American citizens, just as some correspondents representing American organizations abroad are foreign citizens, but most of the foreign correspondents in the capital are citizens of the countries where their organizations are owned. Their kinship with the diplomatic correspondents is much the same in either case.

The foreign press corps in Washington doubtless will increase if and when economic and political conditions permit. The corps of American diplomatic correspondents in the capital has already grown enormously since before the war and may grow even greater as the United States continues to play a leading part in

world affairs. The postwar increase in censorship in some essential news areas abroad and the raising of other obstacles to free movement and free communications may indeed cause editors to look more and more to Washington for foreign-affairs reporting, even if America's direct participation in world affairs should diminish.

Foreign relations have always made news in Washington in any event, and newspapermen have always reported it and doubtless always will.

Secretary of State John Hay, who served in that office from 1898 to 1905, regularly received "a small group of four or five of the most experienced and trusted correspondents who were assigned to the Department of State, and informally explained policies and revealed latest advices received by the Department," Hulen wrote. "He was the first to undertake the experiment, and much, although not all, that he said was in confidence." Elihu Root, who succeeded Hay as Secretary, continued this custom, but Philander C. Knox, who followed Root, abandoned it. "Knox occasionally received an individual correspondent evenings at his home, but no groups," according to Hulen.

Regular open State Department press conferences began to assume real importance in Robert F. Lansing's term as Secretary, which began in 1915, Hulen reported. As recently as 1931 and 1932, however, only seven correspondents kept a full-time watch in the Department, and Secretary Stimson's daily conferences commonly drew no more than twelve or fifteen attendants and often even fewer. Even on the eve of World War II in 1939 there were only ten regulars in the Department pressroom, and Secretary Hull's conferences ordinarily attracted no more than twenty or thirty men. McDermott still had only three assistants and only four to five stenographers, messengers, and clerks.

The bombs that fell on Pearl Harbor put an end to this almost bucolic state of affairs in the coverage of foreign-policy news, and it has never been the same since.

The press conferences of Secretaries of State are now second in popularity and importance only to those of Presidents. Attendance, which averaged sixty when Edward R. Stettinius Jr. was

Secretary, increased to an average of seventy-five to ninety during James F. Byrnes's tenure of office and grew to more than one hundred under General of the Army George C. Marshall's and Dean Acheson's regimes. On occasions of special news interest in the first postwar years as many as two hundred and fifty correspondents attended Secretaries' conferences. Under Marshall attendance outgrew the rooms where the conferences had formerly been held, and they now take place in the Department's auditorium.

McDermott's list of correspondents who have asked to be notified of any major State Department news development now totals one hundred seventy-four names. The Overseas Writers, which had fifty-two members in 1922, had two hundred and twenty-four members in 1949.

The State Department has greatly expanded its press services and facilities in an attempt to keep up with the passionate new interest in foreign-policy news.

McDermott now has a staff of twenty-six. His office was giving out by 1947, 1948, and 1949 more than half again as many releases as it had issued during the war: 1,002 in 1947 and 1,036 in 1948, for example, compared with 611 in 1942 and 539 in 1943.

Twenty years ago the State Department pressroom was a single chamber of cubbyhole proportions, jammed with what looked—and functioned—like secondhand flea-market furniture, “sped with the spavins, past cure of the fives, stark spoiled with the staggers, swayed in the back and shoulder-shotten.”

The room was handy because it was on the same floor with and just around the corner from the offices of the Secretary, the Undersecretary, and the Assistant Secretaries, and the correspondents could keep a close watch on the comings and goings through the most exalted portals. Now the press's working space is three floors away from the Secretary's office. Moreover, the correspondents had a perhaps slightly illicit arrangement with the Department's Negro doormen of that era under which the doormen would interrupt their slumbers or the numbers game which certain of them operated and would inform the correspondents of significant arrivals and departures at important offices. Winners in the num-

bers game also could sometimes be touched for the price of a drink or taxi fare home in cases of extreme need.

A great change has come over all this. Present press quarters comprise a vast, spacious, sanitary, soundproofed area, air-conditioned like the rest of the building and tinted the chaste and vernal April green, which is Washington's most fashionable color for interior decor. There are seventeen work booths for correspondents representing thirty-one news-gathering organizations of seven nationalities. Press quarters further include a room known elegantly as the press lounge and a third premise sometimes indelicately referred to as the Hung-Over Room, whither reporters may retire to nurse such wounds and grudges as may afflict them. The furniture is new and tasteful throughout these quarters—or was when the correspondents moved in. Not a single rusty spring juts out of a single ancient butt-sprung chair, and all the tables and desks still have all four legs—all indeed of the same length.

Gone are the Negro doormen, their news flashes and bulletins, their numbers game, and their small loans. Gone are the colleagues, uncertain of hand, eye, and breath, who were once assigned to the Department because they couldn't be counted on elsewhere and couldn't (so it was supposed) do much harm there. Gone, too, are the swift, stealthy approaches and predatory pounces upon callers at the Department, who could not escape because the quarters were too confined.

Respectability has come to the covering of American foreign policy. The change is quite possibly an improvement.

# Every Day Is Election Day

BY FREDERICK C. OTHMAN

Frederick C. Othman is a specialist in humorous articles on the Washington scene for the United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

The most thoroughly organized and cross-indexed lodge brother in America bar none (and that includes such champion joiners-uppers as congressmen) is the Washington correspondent. He eats more underdone chicken in lace paper pants than a Kiwanian. His hip bulges with membership cards.

And when I say every day's election day for him I'm exaggerating only slightly. If he kept up with all the politics involved in all his own clubs, associations, luncheon groups, guilds, lodges, unions, committees, and fraternities he'd have little time left to speculate in print on the doings of the Republicans and the Democrats.

Take this book. The Publications Committee of the National Press Club is responsible for it, and I frankly never did think it would get written, because we committeemen had to eat too many lunches, mostly sixty-cent hamburgers, in the board room to get around to our typewriters. We yammered and argued and voted on what the title ought to be, whether the publisher was giving us a square deal, what was wrong with the martinis, who was to write what, and where the hell was the waiter with the food, until finally the committee had to quit holding meetings. Only then did the authors get to work.

Some days I had to eat two lunches (and thereby got stuffed like Harry Truman at his multiple Christmas dinners) because of other committees of other clubs holding meetings on the same day.

When I was a cub in St. Louis covering Rotary Club luncheons,

state chiropodist banquets, and W.C.T.U. teas I swore to myself, so help me, if I ever escaped the pallid mashed potatoes beside the paper cup of peas on the plate with the thin sliver of coldish meat I'd do my eating at home. I ate then on a press pass for free.

When finally I got to Washington there seemed to be a germ in the air. My resolution went glimmering, and I'm back eating the beef that was carved with a straight-edged razor. Only difference is that now I pay my own check and I sneer at Rotarians no longer. I'm one of 'em. So is every other correspondent in the capital.

There's the Press Club, with its committees in charge of everything from the dust on the books in the library to the odd noises that emerge from the gullets of the club chorus, and from the nakedness of the art in the main lounge to exactly when a celebrant in the bar reaches the stage that indicates he is to be bounced. The Press Club is the big square at the top of a chart of clubs so complicated as to resemble one of those squiggly displays Chester Bowles used to present to Congress when he was trying to prove what a fine thing was the OPA. From this headquarters the dotted lines run in all directions.

Over in Foggy Bottom, hard by the gas works, is the State Department Correspondents' Association, holding its meetings in rooms whose chairs usually are warmed by diplomatic bottoms. Most of these brothers also are members of the Overseas Writers Association, composed of those gentry who worked abroad at one time or another in their checkered careers. The Overseas Writers meet frequently with considerable pomp and circumstance for lunch at five dollars a throw, including food and speeches by such fellows as Anthony Eden and more lately the vegetarian British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps. He got scrambled eggs, cooked special.

Where the clubmen really congregate (and step on their own toes because they seldom can recall exactly which club is holding a meeting) is the White House. Here hold forth the surviving members of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's old Cuff Links Club. You can recognize 'em because they wear gold cuff links presented by Mr. R. Here also is the Hard Rock Club, composed of those hardy correspondents who went down into a coal mine



with Harry Truman in 1944 when he was running for Vice-President. The members of this display in their lapels gold picks and shovels presented by Mr. T.

These are barely the beginning of subdivided fraternity at the Executive Mansion. The greatest of these forums of brotherhood, free speech, and indifferent eating are the White House Correspondents' Association, the White House Radio Correspondents' Association, and the White House Photographers' Association. And a good thing it is, too, that Harry Truman is blessed with a zinc-lined stomach. Whenever one of these outfits holds a shindig, he, poor man, has got to put on his claw-hammer coat and eat some more of that chicken. He seems to thrive on it.

In 1948 the White House Correspondents officials decided in their wisdom to charge the members \$12.50 per each for themselves and guests for the privilege of joining Mr. Truman at dinner. The resultant howl could be heard in McLean, Virginia, clear across the Potomac. The clubmen didn't object to Mr. T. at the table you understand, but to the price.

The executive board of the correspondents, a mysterious and sacrosanct group about which a mere member is wise not to inquire, concluded that there was justice in these complaints and reduced the price per plate of the 1949 dinner for members to ten dollars. Each correspondent is allowed to invite one guest, usually his boss. For these deadheads the boardmen announced that the tab would be fifteen dollars. This added up again to twenty-five dollars on any kind of calculating machine. To complaints about this, the board said, no comment.

About this same time the members were shocked to read in the morning papers that they had elected Bob Nixon of the International News Service as their president. This was the first they knew about it. But perhaps they shouldn't have been surprised. Tony Vaccaro of the Associated Press was elected president on the same sleepwalking basis in 1948, and Merriman Smith of the United Press in 1947. Fact is I've been a paid-up member of the association since 1932, and I haven't put my mark on a ballot yet. Ah well.

The 1949 dinner wasn't bad. Turkey instead of chicken, and I

never did see a better juggler, a more agile drummer, or a faster-talking comedian than the entertainment committee provided. Mr. Truman stuck it out until the end. Made a speech, too, in which he said it was a wonderful show.

The radio spielers fed him immediately thereafter, and then he had to eat another meal with the Gridiron Club, composed in large part of the same reporters with whom he'd been eating all along.

Then he beat it out to his flying machine so he could recover in Florida. He announced (read between the lines here) that his vacation would continue at Key West for thirteen days, or until he had to return to Washington for more of the same—namely the White House Photographers' dinner.

Of all the clubs in Washington, and I warn you I'm just getting a good start, my favorite is the Fiscal Correspondents' Association. Ladies not admitted to the art gallery. And if they get in by mistake they soon find their way out.

This club was organized in the early days of the New Deal to bring pressure on the Administration for the installation of a new adding machine in the Treasury pressroom. The old one was good only as a nest for one of the Treasury Department's celebrated rats. There was nothing wrong with the machine mechanically, you understand, but it added up to \$999,999,999 only. To do their job properly with the advent of President Roosevelt the fiscal correspondents needed a machine that would add into the billions.

They got this apparatus at once, and the late William Woodin, Mr. Roosevelt's first Secretary of Treasury, dropped down to the pressroom to serenade the members on his violin. It was a relaxing place. Woodin was a frequent visitor until his untimely death. I must report that he never knew the water cooler contained no water. He had no idea the pale fluid in the upturned bottle was gin.

Heavy black smoke sometimes seeped out the door of the pressroom. Yells as of Comanche Indians frequently reverberated up the ancient corridors. The Treasury guards ignored these developments and wisely kept their noses out of the pressroom where, since Woodin, none but members was welcome.

The only time Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. visited the fiscal club he made the mistake of sitting down upon a chair. Then he stood up screaming. The members were playing no favorites. While one group in front kept him in conversation about the state of the nation another sneaked up behind and ignited a small bonfire on the floor beneath his seat. He scrambled, never to return. He could not seem to realize that in a democracy such as that of the fiscal experts' everybody, including the Secretary of the Treasury, deserved and got the same warm and smoky welcome. The association's fire department long since had discovered that blazing carbon paper made the blackest smoke.

The members tended well their water cooler without the water. Day and night they kept a blackjack game in action. They also engaged in foot races, weight-lifting contests, and other athletic activities I'll be delighted to describe in private and over a beer. And finally as patrons of the arts they lavished tender attention on their gallery. This consisted of feminine photos in the nude for the most part, with appropriate captions, lavish frames, and some prominent faces carefully clipped and superimposed with glue upon the heads of the nekkid ladies. The Fiscal Correspondents' art gallery was libelous per se.

When John Snyder became Secretary of the Treasury and paid his first visit, fortunately without sitting down, he was scandalized. He said nothing, but over the next week end his painters were at work. They scraped off all the art from the walls and painted them in baby blue. Other workmen also removed the gin cooler and replaced it with an automatic drinking fountain which produced water only. This was a sad blow to the Fiscal Correspondents, but they said nothing. Patiently, like spiders reweaving a torn web, they began assembling a new art exhibit. It perhaps is not up to the high standards yet of the old, but it is sufficiently startling even now to send occasional females on their way without stating their wants. They usually open the door, gulp, and silently disappear.

The Fiscal Correspondents, I hasten to add, also do some work. I don't know how they find the time, but if it were not for them

the financial pages of America's press would be scrawny indeed. And the Treasury a dull and fusty establishment.

Sigma Delta Chi, the honorary journalistic fraternity, has a large and active chapter in Washington, complete with the chicken in the pants. And the Newspaper Guild has chapters all over the place, meetings at the drop of a hat, and arguments far into the night. It is amazing to me how the members of a labor union, particularly the articulate ones of the Guild, can battle so long and so vociferously over so little. On the other hand I also was amazed recently to be invited to a meeting at the Willard Hotel of the United Press chapter of the Guild. You think the members were damning management? And grouching about their pay? Haw.

They were downing their scotch and chewing their potato chips while they discussed in deadly earnest how to improve the quality of their work. So help me, Hannah, they were. First they held a seminar on how best to pry news out of a bureaucrat, how to bypass his press agent, and how to translate the gobbledegook of his handouts into English. Then they argued about grammar, sentence structure, and the architecture of the paragraph until you'd have thought that here was a class in advanced English composition. And so actually it was.

In 1944, you may remember, there was a fellow named Tom Dewey running for President for the first time. He was traveling with a trainload of Washington correspondents when in Castle Rock, Wyoming, boom! The engine hit a cow, and all hands were shaken up. A few suffered bruises; still fewer were scratched enough to bleed.

Any other trainload of passengers would have wigwagged a lawyer and sued the railroad for eighteen million dollars. But not the gents of the Fourth Estate. Habit was too much with 'em. They shook their heads dazedly as they crawled out of the wreckage, and then on the spot they organized another club: the Castle Rock Survivors' Association. It meets regularly over chicken, while the members brag about their wounds, which seem to grow more gruesome with each passing year.

J. Russell Young, who looks more like a senator than a senator

does, used to cover the White House for the *Washington Evening Star*. This was an arduous task, but Russ also found time to play chess with visiting firemen and secret-service agents, draw portraits in charcoal of those whose faces amused him, and organize the J. Russell Young School of Expression. This was and is half educational institution and half club. J. Russell now is a District of Columbia Commissioner, but the school meets regularly (over chicken, of course) so that the graduates may sneer at the forensic efforts of the new students.

All the members of the foregoing institutions, plus some others in skirts, automatically have joined the House and Senate press galleries, and at the moment all is well upon Capitol Hill. It wasn't always thus.

For years the gentlemen of the standing committee, elected by the members upon payment of one dollar per year per each, withstood the demands of a few feminine news writers for a ladies' room. The ladies said they were no gents. They had a gents' room, didn't they? Then why should a lady have to scamper around the corner and down the block? Wasn't she a citizen too? And also a human being?

The management regarded these pleas as feminine capriciousness. And ignored 'em. The ladies, led by Elizabeth May Craig of a string of New England papers, as you can imagine, got more desperate with each passing hour, month, yes, and year. They did an unprecedented thing. Ignored the almighty committee and appealed directly to the Rules Committee of the Senate and to the Speaker of the House.

These gallant lawgivers brought the problem of the ladies' powder room before the full membership of both bodies, which voted overwhelmingly to give the girls white-tiled sanctums they could call their own. These were installed some years ago, but the scars brought on by this ruckus between the sexes still have not healed completely.

I might add in passing that Mrs. Craig has become an expert at this kind of thing. Last year she was assigned to go to Europe with the Army, and before she took off she wangled from the Air Force the first ladies' room ever to be installed within a B-29.

And while I'm on the subject of skirts I must report that there are more of these in the Washington press corps than ever before. The ladies, who never have been allowed to join the National Press Club, retaliated by organizing not one club of their own, but two. One of these is called the Women's National Press Club. The other is named the American Newspaper Women's Club. And if I had any sense I'd stop right there. The rival clubwomen are a little touchy.

The Newspaper Women's Club in any event owns its own clubhouse and looks down its nose at the Women's Press Club, which doesn't. The latter takes an equally dim view of the Newspaper Women. Claims they are not either. Says mostly they are society dames who never saw the inside of a city room. So they both hold regular parties at which President Truman and his missus eat chicken.

For years, it seemed like, the female reporters and the wives of the members conducted an insidious infiltration program into the National Press Club itself. What if the ladies couldn't join? They'd run the club anyhow. And almost did.

First they got the board (which has wives, too, never forget) to establish a ladies' dining room. The ladies used this as their private sanctum and grumbled when a mere man entered. They also kicked about the food and the service and said they believed they ought to be allowed into the main dining room on Sundays. They got that privilege. Then they said they should use it on Thursday nights too. Again the board bowed low.

The girls pressed the point. They said they believed they'd use the main dining room every night. Yes ma'am, said the board. Then the ladies went too far.

They said they had decided to take over the bar and use it for a cocktail lounge. I can tell you that anguish prevailed in the board room. The masters of the club were subjected to pressure from every side. Their wives lobbied at home, and there's no better base of attack, as any congressman can report. The membership on the other side threatened to resign en masse, or almost, if a female ever stuck her powdered nose past the swinging door.

The governors, as all rulers must, struck a compromise. They

built the ladies a cocktail lounge of their own at the far end of the ballroom, where they can yammer to their little hearts' content, with nary an echo reaching the cardroom. Peace, it's wonderful. And probably will be until this book is published and the ladies get a look at it. Particularly at Chapter 16.

## Coverage Today

BY THOMAS L. STOKES

Thomas L. Stokes, born in Atlanta and a graduate of the University of Georgia, has been on the Washington scene continuously since 1921. He has been a correspondent for the United Press and the New York *World Telegram* and is now a syndicated columnist for United Features. He received a Pulitzer prize for national reporting, 1938, and in 1946 the Raymond Clapper Memorial Award for Washington news coverage. He is the author of an autobiography, *Chip off My Shoulder*, 1940.

Perhaps it never occurs to you, but back of that news story with a Washington dateline that you read casually in your newspaper you would find, if you could whisk yourself across the space between, another human being, man or woman, who spends his or her days—and sometimes nights—about some one or other of the many sources of news in that veritable maze of buildings in Washington that houses your national government.

He or she may be completely anonymous, or merely a “Washington correspondent” whose name means nothing to you, or “the Washington correspondent” of your local newspaper. He or she is figuratively legion, for Washington is today the news capital of the world, and it takes a lot of human beings to get the news at the source, to process it, and to get it to you there in the newspaper which you read over your breakfast in the morning or in your living room or study at night.

Today there are nearly fourteen hundred men and women engaged in gathering and processing the news of Washington for



our nation and the world, or to be exact 1,381 accredited by the established governing bodies of each medium at the time this was written. This figure, of course, is subject to constant change—and upward if recent years furnish a guide.

They were divided: newspapers, 785; radio and television, 273; periodicals, 200; and photographers, 123.

Those who operate in this flourishing news-gathering industry in the national capital, with their families, constitute a small town in themselves, a town within a city. They have their own social organizations and their own official associations for self-regulation and self-discipline. Newspapermen early established their right of access to the sources of news and their code of privileges, since the newspaper tradition in Washington is an ancient and cherished one, and thus paved the way for similar access and privileges for the other media as they came along.

Most of the news with a Washington dateline that you find on the front page of your newspaper day after day comes from three principal sources: the White House, Congress, and the State Department. The President is always the leading character in the great drama of American politics, for he is both a person and a symbol. Congress is constantly interesting not only because it makes the laws that affect you and me in our daily lives, but also because it is a constantly seething cauldron of issues and personalities. The State Department is almost daily in the spotlight in this sometimes confusing and disturbing postwar period, with its Truman Doctrine for Greece and Turkey, its Marshall Plan for economic recovery in Europe, the Atlantic Pact to bind us and western Europe together in a common front against encroachments by Russia. Washington has become the capital of the world, and the State Department is the front office where foreign policy is developed and executed day by day.

The White House correspondent is the most glamorous figure in the Washington news-reporting world to the public at large, perhaps, though the aura about him is sometimes magnified beyond its relative significance in the whole Washington news-gathering process. There are other news sources that are more productive day in and day out. This can be said objectively by

one who himself periodically has covered the White House over a period of many years, beginning with the Warren G. Harding administration in the early 1920s. Among the memories that linger from those now long-gone days are the series of conferences over coal-mine and railroad-shop strikes that made a harassed man out of the usually genial President. He dramatized his personal ordeal when he came from his office one sweltering summer day to visit for a few minutes with the White House reporters after a particularly grueling session, shirt-sleeved and wan of face, and remarked to the men in the profession in which he had spent a good deal of his life, "I'm glad to get away from that job in there. It's good to be with you fellows for a few minutes." Another memory is of nights spent sitting about the lobby of the White House Executive Offices during an illness of Mrs. Harding. Happily she recovered to live for some years thereafter. At an early age a young reporter learned how the sunrise comes over the White House lawn.

The generations of White House reporters before and since have had the same sort of experiences. They are accepted and routine, though never so much so that they are not recalled whenever White House correspondents of other eras and this sit down in idle moments on their beats or off to pass the time in reminiscence, even as this one has done.

Glamor attaches naturally to the White House correspondent because of his very close and constant association with this seat of power. He spends virtually all of every day at the White House, stationed just outside the President's office when the Chief Executive is in Washington, and lives as close to him almost as a valet when the President travels. He is identified with the President in the public mind as much as the Secret Service men who guard the President and dog his steps wherever he goes. For there, too, is the White House correspondent.

A staffman is maintained as White House correspondent by the three press associations, Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service, and by the larger metropolitan newspapers. His job is a demanding one. This is true especially of the press association White House correspondent. The White House

is his sole job and sole field of operation. He is responsible for everything that happens there that is news. He goes to his post at the White House Executive Offices in the morning, remains there all day, and accompanies the President if the latter leaves the White House for an official function at night.

In a news conference with the President's press secretary every morning the White House correspondents get a preview of the day's events at the Executive Offices, a list of the visitors who are scheduled to see the President that day, and any news announcements ready to be released. Thereafter they station themselves about the lobby or in the pressroom which adjoins it, interview every caller after he sees the President, and keep in contact with the various secretaries and officials at the Executive Offices with whom they establish friendly relations as news sources.

White House correspondents of the press associations have direct telephone connections with their offices, with private booths. They dictate their stories over the telephone and keep in communication to relay tips about possible news developments elsewhere from information obtained at the White House either through visitors or news sources in the White House and receive queries and tips from their offices that have initiated elsewhere about possible White House news.

Their day's work ends nominally when the President leaves his office and retires to the mansion for the night, though it really does not end then, nor in fact does it ever end, for they are literally charged with the President for twenty-four hours a day. Every so often they must get in touch with the White House at night for an answer to some query or tip that has come to their offices, and occasionally they must spend hours in front of the mansion at night waiting for the breakup of some official conference on government business that the President has called. Such night conferences are held in the White House itself instead of the Executive Offices.

The job of the White House correspondent is, in short, the President. From close and intimate association with the White House personnel and with the President himself the regularly assigned White House correspondents get to know the President,

his character and personality, his habits and from that knowledge frequently are able to diagnose his various acts as President and to forecast what he might do in a given situation or set of circumstances. An example was when the late Robert J. Bender, White House correspondent for the United Press in the Woodrow Wilson administration, was able to predict that President Wilson would attend the Paris Peace Conference after World War I. There had been some speculation as to whether the President would go to Paris. Bender knew Wilson so well that he knew he would insist on sitting in personally at the Peace Conference and so got a news beat for which the source was his own knowledge of personal character.

There is big news at the White House. There are also the homely incidents that happen there as in any other household in the land which the alert and knowing White House correspondent finds out from personal acquaintance with members of the staff to weave into human-interest stories. There was, for instance, the story of the mechanical hobbyhorse on which President Calvin Coolidge exercised secretly. That came from a tip that J. Russell Young, then White House correspondent for the Washington *Evening Star* and later Commissioner for the District of Columbia, received from someone who had talked with a mechanic at the Navy Yard where the horse had been sent for repairs and which Young confirmed in a casual conversation with Frank W. Stearns, the Boston merchant, a close friend and confidant of the President who spent a good deal of time at the White House. Young wrote a delightful yarn about the way in which the President put this mechanical buckaroo through its paces, with a description of the perturbation of the President when the animal went into high gear and almost threw him. His story had the quality of surprise, for the public had not pictured the rather dour New Englander in such a role. The story was picked up all over the country and became the subject of cartoons and light editorials.

There was the story of the "assassination" of President Martin Van Buren which Bruce McNamee, White House correspondent in the Harding and Coolidge regimes for Universal Service, discovered in a conversation with a Secret Service friend. In the

middle of the night a pistol shot rang out in the lower reaches of the White House. An investigation by frantic Secret Service men disclosed that the eerie disturbance was caused by a policeman on guard in the glassed-in corridor leading from the Executive Offices to the White House in the rear. He had dozed off as he sat in a chair on his post of duty. Suddenly he awoke from his cat-nap to see before him in the moonlight that streamed in through the glass paneling the somewhat forbidding face of Martin Van Buren. It was a tribute perhaps to the sculptor of the marble bust of the President who had been so many years in his grave that the policeman in his sudden excitement had whipped out his pistol and cracked at what he thought was an intruder. His marksmanship might be rated fair. He hit Martin Van Buren in his stone neck, opening a wound that required a trip to the repair shop.

Then there was the story of President Herbert Hoover's sixty-mile-an-hour dash on a quiet Sunday afternoon from his mountain retreat on the Rapidan to the White House at news of a sudden development in connection with the German debt moratorium. Driving at such speed on Sunday afternoon over Virginia's roads was unusual for a President in those days. Mr. Hoover was always very meticulous about the proprieties. Consequently he took offense when he saw the incident recorded in a box on the front page of the *New York Times* the next morning, so much so that he ordered the chief of the Secret Service to investigate and find out who was responsible for the "leak." Nothing ever came of it, for all that Turner Catledge, White House correspondent for the *New York Times*, had done was to work out a simple problem in arithmetic involving the distance and the time it took to make the trip. His story was merely to emphasize the emergency in foreign affairs that had developed of a quiet Sunday afternoon.

In those days when President Hoover retired to his retreat on week ends the White House correspondents were not allowed to go there with him, but stayed at an inn several miles away and kept in touch by telephone with the President's lodge. On this particular Sunday they learned suddenly that the President had left his Rapidan camp and was headed hurriedly back toward the capital. They set out in pursuit in the course of their business,

but never were able to catch up with him. This sort of thing is a greater cause for anxiety to a White House reporter than the layman can realize, for he is never supposed to let the President get out of sight figuratively when traveling. His whereabouts and movements must be known at all times.

All of this is part of the White House correspondent's business, and there are thousands of similar stories. It adds the constant spice of adventure—that is, when a fellow is young. The writer was among a group of newspapermen who had a similar experience while covering Herbert Hoover. The then President-elect suddenly left Fort Myers, where he had been visiting with Harvey Firestone, Henry Ford, and Thomas A. Edison, and dashed away across Florida toward Miami Beach, where he was headquartered in this preinauguration interlude, without any warning for the newspaper correspondents who had been told the night before that he would return around the coast on the Jeremiah Milbank yacht on which he had come to Fort Myers. The news caught us at breakfast at the hotel, and we jumped up from unfinished ham and eggs, got into the trailer we were using for this assignment, and sped away across the state two hours behind the President-elect, whom we never overtook. There was, we learned later, no special reason for this quick departure, though we speculated nervously among ourselves the whole trip. This reporter remembers it very vividly not only because of his personal anxiety at the time over escape of the quarry, but because he bumped into a door in his haste in getting out of that hotel dining room and got a handsome cut over his eye which he was never able to explain satisfactorily to his wife who met him at the other end of the journey.

Traveling with the President is one of the most exciting and at the same time one of the most wearing experiences of White House correspondents, for, mixed with the fun, of which there is plenty—even if not so much as the newspaper reader imagines—are not only such frustrations as recounted, but considerable and sometimes seemingly endless work. This is especially true on long railroad tours and in election years most of all, when the White House correspondent is grinding out copy at all hours as he records

the President's progress and speeches for the daily newspaper—and perhaps posterity.

For many other Washington correspondents not assigned there daily and regularly the White House is a point of call more or less frequently, particularly those who are correspondents for single newspapers and specialize in local news as well as handling national news from time to time and who range the whole city as assignments take them here and there. Often a correspondent who concentrates on news for his locality must go to the White House when a visitor of special interest to his city, state, or area calls there to see the President about some matter of interest to his newspaper so that he may interview the visitor after he has talked with the President. The visitor may be a federal government official who has authority over the matter, or a local official who has come to Washington in connection with it, or a local politician on a strictly political mission, a businessman, labor leader, or what not. Consequently numbers of such correspondents are constantly in and out of the White House every day. Some of them attend the morning conferences of the President's press secretary to check on local news developments.

Once a week when the President himself holds his regular press conference newspapermen and -women from all over the capital flock to the White House to stand in the President's office for the back-and-forth of questions and answers. These weekly press interviews with the President are always well attended, and occasionally the office is jammed when some momentous announcement is expected or when developments of one sort and another in this country or abroad focus attention on the attitude of the President and suggest that he will have something to say in regard to them. The late President Roosevelt usually held two press conferences weekly when in Washington. President Truman reduced the number to one.

The State Department has always been a top assignment in Washington, and it has become increasingly important with the commanding role the United States has assumed in world affairs. The press associations, big metropolitan newspapers, and some foreign newspapers and news agencies keep staffmen there for the

same continuous vigil as is maintained at the White House. This post requires able, intelligent, well-informed newspapermen who also must have special skill as news getters, for they must develop contacts among officials in all the geographical divisions, or the geographical "desks" as they are called, upon whom they can rely for news and background information and guidance to interpret properly events all over the world. They are at one and the same time reporter, student, and part diplomat. Theirs is a highly responsible job.

Like White House reporters, they, too, must watch the daily visitors who call to confer with the Secretary of State or other high officials and interview them as they leave. One of the most dramatic of such interviews was with Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura and Japanese Peace Envoy Saburo Kurusu, who had presented themselves in the anteroom of Secretary of State Cordell Hull at the very moment when the bombs were raining down in the attack on Pearl Harbor on that memorable Sunday, December 7, 1941, though it was not known to the reporters nor publicly when that conference broke up that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. State Department reporters were on the job twenty-four hours a day in that tense period just before and after the war with Japan began. Front-page headlines were made daily at the State Department.

For general information and background on broad policy matters the Secretary of State holds regular press conferences, and these, like the President's conferences, are well attended, usually attracting some general-news reporters who rove the whole Washington scene as well as specialists in foreign affairs representing newspapers here and abroad. The press associations, as well as some big newspapers, have men regularly assigned to cover the numerous embassies and legations of foreign governments in Washington, which also requires peculiar skill and thorough background in foreign affairs.

The Capitol, where Congress sits day by day during sessions and legislates and quarrels and stews, is the biggest single source of news in Washington. Sooner or later all policies must go to Congress for ultimate analysis and approval, and a wealth of



information is available at the Capitol always about what goes on in government generally.

Members of Congress must find out what goes on all over the government as part of their responsibility to the public. Accordingly the Capitol is a rich mine of news for the energetic reporter. Some of the best reporters, not only in Washington but in the nation, are found among the men and women who cover Congress regularly, both in the staffs of press associations and among special correspondents assigned there. From Capitol reporters, too, because they become experts in politics in its usual practical sense, come those who are assigned to cover national conventions, Presidential campaigns and other national political events.

It is the consistently most exciting news front in Washington, for there practical politics is played in its most fascinating and intriguing manner. There you are dealing with experts in what has been called "the great American game."

Reporting there requires energy and intuitive ability. The days are sometimes long and always filled with activity, and occasionally there are night sessions. For staffmen of press associations and newspapers regularly assigned there the day begins with coverage of committee sessions in the morning, either open sessions where there are public hearings on bills being prepared for floor consideration—and there are a score or more of these every day in House and Senate—or executive sessions in which committees are working out the final form of bills. Outside of committee rooms where such executive sessions are being held you will find a group of Capitol reporters waiting for the committee to break up. They may get an official explanation from the committee chairman of what transpired, but often this does not occur or if it does is not sufficient, and so the reporters begin to seek out friends on the committee to ferret out privately what really happened. This sometimes requires digging. But the reporters always find out in the end, and you get it in your newspaper. You may depend upon that.

Reporters who cover the daily committee sessions and the regular sessions of House and Senate acquire a detailed knowledge of government and are as a result the best informed reporters in

Washington on the whole field of national government, though reporters who are specialists naturally will have a more intimate knowledge in a particular subject. Public hearings by committees produce a continuing and enormous amount of information about government and government policies and public reaction to them. There the cabinet officer must appear to state his case for bills recommended by the Administration dealing with his sphere of government, and there also you watch a constant parade of assistant secretaries and other department officials and heads of special and independent bureaus and agencies to develop details about the work of their departments and agencies in response to questions from committee members. There, too, representatives of groups and interests affected by the proposed measures appear, whether it be business, labor, the farmer, or others. They are great open and public forums.

When House and Senate assemble for their regular daily sessions, which ordinarily is at noon, though occasionally it may be an hour or two hours earlier when there is a rush on some particular major bill, you will see the correspondents regularly assigned to report these sessions take their places in the press gallery. The press associations keep these sessions covered from beginning to end so that nothing that occurs on the floor escapes them. Staffmen for the big metropolitan newspapers likewise follow these proceedings closely.

Much news, of course, develops off the floor and not in the open, so to speak. Consequently you may always find reporters in and out of the lobby of the House of Representatives and about what is known as "The President's Room" off the Senate lobby busily interviewing members of House and Senate on this or that maneuver, legislative or political.

Newspapermen generally have the run of the House lobby, and press association representatives are permitted on the floor itself. Similar privileges are not granted, however, in the Senate. No newspaperman can go either into the Senate lobby or on the floor during sessions.

Formerly press associations were permitted to have admission to the Senate floor during sessions for a representative. But this

privilege was revoked during the Hoover administration when Paul Mallon, then covering the Senate for the United Press, stirred up resentment among senators by publishing two secret roll calls on Presidential nominations taken in executive session. Mallon was not, of course, on the floor at the time, as executive sessions were closely guarded. He got his information after the session from members who did not believe in secret sessions on public business of such importance as nominations to high office by the President and who checked the roll for him and gave it to him. Mallon won wide commendation for this public service, and it brought about one of the few reforms in legislative procedure in recent times, which was to amend Senate rules to require open public sessions thereafter on nominations. Previously they always had been secret. But the Senate Rules Committee rescinded the floor privilege for press associations because of Mallon's act. It never has been restored.

While more of the spectacular front-page news comes from Congress, the White House, and State Department, there is a constant flow of news from the other regular executive departments and special bureaus and agencies—and there are so many of the latter category in these days. Some of it is big news nationally, and most of it is important because of its direct effect upon the daily lives of all of us in this age when government has come to have such a close relation with our citizens and their families through the reforms and changes of recent years. A great many reporters, able and alert men and women, are regularly assigned to the news centers in this area to keep you informed. During the war, of course, the War and Navy departments were constant hot spots that were covered on a twenty-four-hour basis, and since that time, for we still have no real peace in the world, there has been continued emphasis on news from the military, naval, and air sectors now concentrated in the National Defense Establishment under unification of the services.

The scope and intensity of Washington news coverage have expanded and contracted periodically through the years, depending upon circumstances, though for the last two decades news reporting in the national capital has been enjoying a bull

market. There was a contraction after World War I, during which Washington news had suddenly become very important. Soon after the nation's dramatic and successful military entry upon the world stage in World War I we withdrew into our shell of isolation with rejection of membership in the League of Nations so that our country was not in the main current of international affairs in a role of leadership as after World War II a quarter of a century later. Here at home after a postwar depression that disappeared quickly the nation was prosperous and content during the laissez-faire Republican regimes of the middle 1920s. Consequently there was not a great deal of interest in what went on in Washington. This was reflected in a contraction of the news-gathering business.

Washington really became the news capital of the nation during the great depression that began to manifest itself publicly in the 1929 stock-market crash and continued well into the 1930s. The advent of the Roosevelt New Deal, with all the measures it took—first, for salvage and recovery and, second, for reform on a wide front—turned the attention literally of almost every citizen constantly upon Washington; for every citizen had a very direct and personal interest sooner or later in what was done during this amazing and breath-taking span. It meant food, shelter, jobs, safety of bank deposits and investments, safety for homes and farms, higher wages, social security for unemployment and old age, and the like, all very personal matters.

News about all these things originated from Washington. Every development was of keen and often anxious interest to millions all over the country. Nearly every household had a stake in what was being done in Washington. This all meant more and more people in Washington to gather this news and more to handle it and get it out over the wires, over the radio, in pictures. All this while international news was falling off, with shrinking foreign trade and all the nations pointing their economies toward attempted self-sufficiency.

Interest in this country in Washington never had a chance to lag, for World War II broke upon us before we had emerged completely from depression. Washington suddenly became the news

capital of the world. For almost overnight the United States became the banker and producer for the war all over the globe, and it supplied as well millions of men and directed over-all strategy, diplomatic and military. After the war was over it continued to be the banker and producer and broker for a bankrupt world. Billions were poured out in rehabilitation, an operation that constantly gathered interest at home and abroad because it provided resistance against the advance of Communism which feeds upon broken-down economies and hungry, idle, and distressed people. Men and women in Europe, in Asia, in Africa hung nervously upon news from Washington for it brought assurance of food and medicines and funds to rebuild farm and industry so people could help themselves. Statesmen and diplomats of many countries, friendly and unfriendly, sat figuratively at the news tickers to scan dispatches from the news capital of the world.

Our world role likewise has intensified the interest of our own people in what happens in Washington.

The men and women who tell this story are a widely assorted lot, with widely assorted duties.

Newspapermen divide into many categories. There are Washington correspondents who represent a single newspaper; some who represent two, three, four, or sometimes a string, usually newspapers in smaller or medium-sized cities; and many who are members of a sizable Washington bureau for a single big metropolitan daily. These bureaus vary in size, at the time this was written, ranging up to a staff of twenty-eight in the Washington bureau of the *New York Times* which is the largest. There are variations of these. The nineteen Scripps-Howard newspapers maintain a big bureau known as the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance. Some of its staff members cover news of local interest to the various newspapers; others cover national news, develop features and special stories related to editorial policy; and others write national editorials for the newspapers in the chain. Another variation which approaches a press association is a bureau with a staff of varying size that serves a number of newspapers here and there throughout the country. The largest such bureau is operated

by Bascom Timmons, a veteran who came to Washington from Texas many years ago. Two are operated by women: Esther Tufty and Mary Cottrell, widow of Jesse Cottrell, long a Washington correspondent. These enterprises represent commendable newspaper initiative. Their reporters cover a wide range.

The largest staffs in Washington are maintained by the three major press associations which have bureaus in key cities all over this country and the world as well as string correspondents in smaller towns and cities and serve newspapers all over the world. The total personnel of press association Washington bureaus, including telegraph operators, are: Associated Press, 155; International News Service, 45; and United Press, 103. They are the Washington correspondents for the great bulk of newspapers in this country and elsewhere. Only a comparatively small number of newspapers have individual and specialized news coverage in Washington. Every daily newspaper in our country takes one of these daily press-association services, some two, while some few subscribe to all three. Their coverage of Washington is highly organized and detailed. AP and UP also operate local news ticker services over which Washington news is distributed by teletype as it breaks to subscribers among both newspaper bureaus and government offices in the capital.

Each of the three press associations keeps reporters regularly at the principal sources of news in Washington. It is frequently said that the press associations "watch every rat hole," and this is almost literally true. All day long as news develops these reporters feed it into the central office either by dictating over telephones with direct lines from such key spots as the White House, State Department, and other departments and agencies or by filing it on direct telegraph-printer circuits into the main office from the press galleries of House and Senate at the Capitol, where direct telephone connections also are available for the use of press association staffmen. This news is edited and processed and filed on trunk wires from the central offices of the press associations. Each such central office is a busy labyrinth of editors (usually known in the trade as desk men), rewrite men, wire filers, and printer operators, the whole operation under direction of a

bureau manager whose job is one of the most responsible among Washington newspapermen and often the most trying and difficult. He and his staff are on call for emergencies day and night twenty-four hours a day. Some of the biggest stories break in odd hours, showing no respect whatever for orderly living.

Some of these, too, are what are usually known as "police stories," that is, stories involving accidents or catastrophes affecting human beings and having nothing whatever to do with tariff and tax bills or labor legislation or the United Nations or Russia, for Washington is, like all other cities, full of human beings, a fact sometimes overlooked.

Such a story was that of the famous Knickerbocker Theater disaster in Washington in which ninety-seven persons lost their lives when a faultily designed roof fell under the weight of one of the city's biggest snowstorms on a Saturday night back in January 1922. All of us all over the city were routed out for that. I still can remember going into the United Press office on the following Monday morning to see Carl Groat, one of the staff who had recently returned from a tour of duty in Germany, sitting at his typewriter, somewhat wan-looking, drinking at intervals from a big tin cup of coffee from a nearby restaurant as he wrote the final "clean-up" story on that tragedy. He hadn't been to bed for two nights. I remember quite well, too, how some of us were rushed out to La Plata in nearby Maryland when a freak tornado wrecked a schoolhouse and killed and injured many school children, while others were hurried off to hospitals into which the injured were brought. Then there was the Christmas Eve night when we were pulled away from our homes or parties to cover a fire that broke out in the White House Executive Offices during the Hoover administration.

Washington political correspondents frequently have to become police reporters again, and they turn to it with a will. After all most of them started that way, and such occasions provide welcome interludes from national and world problems and from dignitaries who may once have served in city councils and state legislatures but now are often stuffed shirts.

Press association reporters in Washington are first-rate news-

papermen, among the best in the business. Usually they have served in other bureaus in various parts of the country. They represent the cream of such talent. They constitute a reservoir which is often drawn upon by big metropolitan newspaper bureaus, newspaper syndicates, magazines, and radio networks. They get valuable experience because they cover at one time or another every news source in Washington. Consequently they are familiar with the over-all operations of government and come to understand the significance of the sometimes devious moves on the vast checkerboard of government and politics.

Somewhat comparable to the press association technique, though on a restricted and specialized basis, is that of the Washington bureaus of big metropolitan newspapers—New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Chicago. These bureaus have a city-desk setup, with reporters regularly assigned to the principal news centers—White House, Capitol, State Department, and so on—though they do not attempt to cover the city in the detailed manner of the press associations. They concentrate on the major stories of the day or stories in which their newspaper may be particularly interested, and they seek also for news that is overlooked or underemphasized by other newspapers. News “scoops” or “beats” come from this sort of initiative possible in specialized coverage by competent men on the Washington staffs of metropolitan newspapers; and there still are such “scoops,” even though they are less frequent because of the generally more intensive coverage of the city by all types of news reporters. The big metropolitan bureaus in the national capital have a large file every day to their newspapers that is sent out over their own direct wires.

In cases where a newspaper is represented by only one or two staffmen in Washington the type of coverage varies. News of local or regional interest is usually a primary concern. Some devote their entire attention to this. Others also cover national stories in which their newspapers are interested. The nature of their work depends on the wishes of their newspapers. Correspondents who represent a string of newspapers concentrate on news of local interest. Special correspondents often furnish



sprightly copy with the spice of human interest, and some of them have large followings and win reputations in their own areas. Frequently they dig out stories in Washington exposing situations in their territories that trace back to a federal agency or official which subsequently becomes a matter of national news which other newspapers then pick up and follow. These local correspondents quite often have their influence on national policy through their energetic coverage of news for their areas.

Highly skilled specialists are developed among men and women reporters in Washington because of the character of their assignments and the newspapers they represent. There are able financial reporters, for example, whose findings are read closely not only by the business and financial community, but also by government officials engaged in that field. Reporters representing midwestern and southern newspapers devote much of their attention to government agricultural policy, and among them you find both men and women who acquire an expert knowledge of farm and farm-commodity problems. It is so, too, with foreign affairs as well as the numerous other categories of news which Washington correspondents must follow.

From time to time special correspondents turn up stories that not only attract national attention, but set Congressional investigations into motion to explore all angles of situations thus revealed, with the result that legislation frequently follows. A brilliant exposé of that sort was by the late Paul Y. Anderson of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, one of the great Washington correspondents of all time, who uncovered the Continental Trading Company, so-called, which was an important link in the famous Teapot Dome oil scandals of the Harding administration in the early 1920s. Another example of this kind of initiative was the revelation by Leo Sack, then Washington correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Press* of the Scripps-Howard chain, of huge expenditures in a Pennsylvania primary. That prompted an investigation by the Senate that ultimately revealed that some three million dollars had been spent by three Republican candidates for the United States Senate and resulted in the unseating of the successful candidate, William S. Vare. An example of public-

service reporting of the finest and most intelligent character was that by Ruth Finney of the Scripps-Howard newspapers and Marion F. Ramsay of the Hearst newspapers in covering the protracted investigation by the Federal Trade Commission into the electric-power industry in the late 1920s and early 1930s which laid the groundwork for regulatory legislation. These are samples of consistent good work by special correspondents in Washington. It goes on day in and day out through the years.

The constantly increasing importance of Washington in the nation and the world is manifest in the attention it gets from our magazines, both news and general, and from business and technical journals of all sorts.

Large bureaus are maintained by the weekly news magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*, with staffmen regularly assigned to the principal sources of news in Washington, specialists in their various fields, who cover their "beats" day by day just as do newspaper reporters. The significance these magazines attach to Washington is shown by the fact that the first section of each of them is devoted to an account of the previous week's events in Washington, supplemented by detailed treatment of developments of particular importance and by personality sketches of leading figures in government and politics.

The same day-by-day reportorial technique is used also by *United States News and World Report*, published by David Lawrence, which every week carries very informative articles about Washington and world events of an expository and background nature. It is ably written and ably edited by a highly competent staff of ex-newspaper correspondents, veterans who know their way around the national capital from long experience. Foreign correspondents are stationed in the principal news centers in other parts of the world. A newcomer to the Washington magazine field is *Kiplinger Magazine*, published by Willard M. Kiplinger, the ex-newspaper correspondent who started many years ago the highly successful Washington newsletter familiar to businessmen and financiers all over the country, itself now a Washington institution. His magazine is devoted to special articles about Washington and developments elsewhere of interest to the

general reader as well as to businessmen. The McGraw-Hill business, financial, and scientific group of magazines has one of the largest bureaus in Washington, staffed by specialists in all the manifold fields covered by its periodicals.

Coverage of news of interest to the rapidly growing television industry began in Washington even before most of us were aware of this new medium by establishment of *Television Digest* by the foresighted Martin Codel, who was likewise a pioneer in the radio news-and-information field in Washington when he founded *Broadcasting* magazine in 1931. The latter, now published by Sol Taishoff, who was associated with Codel in this very successful enterprise, covers news in Washington and elsewhere of interest to the industry and radio broadcasters. Ten years earlier Robert D. Heinel had founded a radio newsletter which is still published.

Aside from these and many magazines and publications of specialized interest that are represented by staffers in Washington—to which *Sports Afield* is the newest addition—magazines of more general public interest and circulation also have established bureaus in Washington: *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Life*, *Look*, *Reader's Digest*, and others.

Physically, or in the mechanical sense, Washington then is literally blanketed by news reporters of all kinds.

How well actually is Washington covered?

Here you get differences of opinion and judgment. They range from the periodic "exposé" of Washington correspondents, nearly always anonymous and cynically critical in nature, to the bar-side reminiscences of some old-timer who loves the city, its politics, and its political and newspaper traditions, and in whose stories Washington newspapermen loom somewhat on the heroic side with the usual legends of quaintness and eccentricity.

Neither, of course, accurate.

We can enjoy the latter as we tolerantly mark it off to sentimentality. As for the loose charges in the "exposé" type of commentary to the effect that Washington correspondents are "lazy," that they are "stuffed shirts," that they rely too much on the government "handout," the local name for formal news releases,

that some of them are little more than personal ambassadors of their bosses back home—all those can be dismissed as ephemeral and flimsy by admitting frankly that cases can be cited in proof of all such allegations among the fourteen hundred men and women who are employed in all the media of news coverage in the national capital. It would be strange if there were not a few among so many. But they are the exceptions.

Criticism, if it would be fair, and judgments, if they would be sound, must take account of circumstances as they exist, among which is that the Washington correspondents cannot all be lumped into one general category for analysis, which is the mistake often made. Washington news coverage is functional and as previously pointed out falls into categories.

There are undoubtedly too many government releases and "handouts," but in a mass-production age—and government in Washington is virtually on an assembly-line basis in these times—that is the simplest and most efficient way to announce routine news of government decisions and activities. It is all news somewhere or other in the country, sometimes to one city, sometimes to a whole area, sometimes to the whole nation. Reporters assigned to the various news fronts in Washington are there to do that necessary routine work, along with their broader job of developing their assignment, familiarizing themselves with the personalities and policies on their "beat" so they can interpret the activities of their particular sector to the public.

There is necessarily a watchdog and fireman aspect to Washington reporting which must be taken into account in any general judgment, though it is a comparatively minor phase. To judge properly the work of individual Washington newspaper correspondents it is necessary to know just what it is they do and are supposed to do—in short their functions in Washington news coverage. In my judgment they rate as an exceedingly capable group, energetic, highly intelligent, well informed, and versatile. It is risking no contradiction to say that our national government is covered better than any other in the world.

Newspaper and press association directors and executives usually know what they are getting in the way of Washington

reporters. In the case of individual newspapers the Washington correspondent in almost every instance has come up through the ranks on his home paper, has covered all sorts of local assignments, usually has specialized in both city and state politics, frequently has served as city editor and occasionally as managing editor or news editor, and is sent to Washington as a promotion. As for press associations, their Washington staffs are made up almost entirely of men and women who have served in numerous other bureaus in the country, frequently abroad also, and their assignment to Washington is a promotion. So Washington correspondents are seasoned, experienced, and able men or they would not be in Washington in the first place.

They are, then, picked men. They have been selected especially for their jobs in Washington. That they not only suited their editor in the first instance, but also continue to suit him—for most of them remain in Washington for the rest of their lives—offers a clue to Washington correspondents and the system they represent. In other words they do to a large degree reflect their editors and their newspapers.

Any criticism of their coverage of Washington is also a criticism of the American newspaper in general. It is necessary to consider the whole pattern, not just the Washington correspondent. A whole system is involved and he reflects that.

I would like from this point on to give my own views on this situation which I have arrived at after more than a quarter century of careful study and observation of capital coverage. It is generally recognized that wide differences of opinion prevail on these topics—political, economic, social, and professional.

The American newspaper and the Washington correspondent, who is a mirror of the American newspaper in miniature, are open to valid criticism. This, however, cannot be broadside either, nor too generalized. For newspapers do not fall into one category. Some are self-satisfied and smug, routinized and politically and economically orthodox. Others show considerable individuality and initiative. Washington correspondents reflect their newspapers to an extent, but not altogether. Some of the representatives of the easygoing type of newspaper often develop a

curiosity that is to be commended, though not demanded, and sometimes this becomes so apparent as to attract notice among newspapers of more initiative, who hire them away. There is among Washington newspapermen the same percentage of individuals who have the itch for fame and perhaps fortune as among newspapermen everywhere and among members of any other trade or profession. There are still greener fields. There are always better assignments in Washington as well as beyond. One job in Washington is not the end. Ambition always has outlets.

In assessing Washington correspondents it is well to take into account the fact that a majority of American newspapers are conservative, which is revealing no secret. Newspapers themselves know it and admit it, and the public knows it. So does the Washington correspondent. It can be said that by and large the percentage of conservatism is less among Washington correspondents than in newspapers in general, which is probably merely a replica of the situation in nearly every city room in the country where reporters as a whole are much less conservative than their publishers. This springs perhaps from their closer contact with the realities in their daily work. They know from firsthand observation the influence that dominant economic interests exert in a city and a state and on city and state government. Those same influences operate on national government.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt goaded newspapers, which he did fairly regularly, he always made a distinction between publishers and the reporters who stood before him. He was very careful to exempt the latter airily from his criticism, a form of condescension that was obvious and not appreciated. But nevertheless he put his finger upon a situation that is very apparent. His general aims won far more support among Washington correspondents than among their publishers.

The Roosevelt war on depression and the dazzling succession of New Deal reforms made up one of the greatest news stories of our entire history, for they embraced both a political and an economic revolution when many old concepts had to be re-examined and discarded. That story was covered in complete

and full detail by a growing contingent of Washington correspondents, even though most newspapers began to strike back editorially more and more at the reform phase of the Roosevelt Revolution. All that was necessary was to tell this story, and Washington correspondents told it and in many cases brilliantly. Those were days when Washington newspapermen literally had to go back to school because of the new concepts that were advanced of which orthodox courses in their colleges had said nothing. During those years as in the war years thereafter Washington correspondents worked tirelessly and for long hours. Their work is a great credit to the corps.

The New Deal era was a great story. There was an equally great story when the reaction against the Roosevelt-reform era set in, when the giant economic forces that Franklin D. Roosevelt had checked for a time revived and came back to the battle. They moved in en masse after election of the Republican Eightieth Congress.

This was a great and dramatic story with the exciting ingredient of conflict. Yet this counterrevolution was not nearly so well covered from Washington as the original revolution. The devious operations of powerful interests in Washington politics did not get the coverage that they deserved, though there were some Washington reporters who dug constantly and deeply to reveal how, for example, the private utilities were trying to break down federal regulatory laws and to stop the needed expansion of public power projects already authorized; how real estate interests worked to defeat rent control and needed housing legislation that had been promised to war veterans by both parties; how other special interests tried to weaken the Wage-Hour and Social Security Acts; how certain tariff-protected industries had almost succeeded in killing the reciprocal trade program; and so on.

This conservative counterrevolution, which was carefully plotted and promoted by corporate wealth and finance, was minimized and underplayed in news dispatches out of Washington, and what went out was in turn given even less attention often by the newspapers themselves, all of which might be ex-

plained on the editorial page where this same counterrevolution was either overlooked entirely, condoned, or even praised.

The fact that this story came as a surprise to the people when President Truman told it to them in his election campaign is a reflection on the newspapers. It should not have been a surprise. The reports of some Washington correspondents that told the story may be found in the files; but generally not a great deal of it was widely enough written, nor often enough, nor with enough detail and emphasis to impress the public. This failure of the newspapers did not help to inspire confidence in them; for in the end the people found out about it.

The lack of interest in this story by so many newspapers had its effect in the too slight attention paid to it by their Washington correspondents. President Truman's election brought demands from the public for more enlightenment thereafter, and this offered a challenge to Washington correspondents and to the newspapers they represent.

The inadequacy—as this writer sees it—of reporting on the post-war offensive of big business and finance to recapture their former dominant influence in government points in itself to a delinquency in Washington news coverage. This is the too little emphasis placed on the impact of great financial and industrial power on Washington, its government, and politics in general. This opens up the big subject of the play of economics upon politics, a game in which the various moves are, it is true, not always easy to discern or to demonstrate. Economic forces most active today in politics may be divided broadly into business, labor, and the farmer, so far as special interests are involved as differentiated from the consumer who embraces all three, as well as others less numerous in the American economy.

Labor's activity is closely scrutinized and reported in considerable detail, and its real influence in Washington is, by and large, exaggerated. That of the farmer is frequently magnified too. But the activity and influence of business are understressed, when not actually ignored, in Washington news coverage. It is more devious and less apparent in its political operations.

The conflict that is generated by constant big business-industrial



pressures upon government was dramatized and symbolized very simply by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he announced that his aim was to move the capital of the nation from New York to Washington. He approached this objective to the point where the political and economic opposition claimed that big government had become the problem rather than big business. His revolution never went that far, of course, contrary to the misleading diagnosis that got wide circulation through all the propaganda avenues available to big business, among which were many newspapers. "Big government" was raised up as the target in the counteroffensive by the revived financial-industrial oligarchy, and this counteroffensive had considerable successes not always immediately apparent to the general public. Another variation of the numerous catchy propaganda arguments was that labor was getting too strong, that we were headed toward a labor government, which was not true either. It was used effectively in applying further restrictions to labor in the campaign that came to its climax in the Taft-Hartley Act, which was perhaps the keystone achievement of the conservative counterrevolution. This campaign overreached itself not only on the labor front, but elsewhere, including a curb on farm benefits granted in the New Deal era, and it was the union of labor and the farmer, each for its own self-interest, that resulted in President Truman's re-election. This was another example of the checks and balances that operate in our system quite often to bring together in a temporary voting alliance diverse interests that subsequently do not co-operate in Congress.

The story of the raids and inroads by big business was disclosed by President Truman rather than the newspapers, and his success in his almost singlehanded campaign is a tribute to his abilities as a campaigner that generally had been far underrated. The failure of the newspapers generally to forecast the election result perhaps was due in part to a temporary blind spot caused by overintensified interest in a change in Washington. They could not see the people over their editorial pages, which they accepted as too much the gospel truth.

They lost contact with the people, who have an uncanny way of

finding out about the diverse interests that operate in our politics, though it sometimes takes time. This discernment in the American people is the salvation of our democracy and the reason for its continued health and stability. They were not misled when they finally got the facts by the propaganda that labor and the farmer were getting sufficient power to throw our system out of balance and "change our form of government," as it was put so glibly.

Nor was the close observer of Washington events who knows the hard facts of politics. Experienced Washington correspondents do know them. Some of them tell the whole story. More of them could if they had the freedom they deserve. This is in the power of the newspapers to bestow and encourage. They have not only an obligation, but a mission under our democratic system. They must begin to tell the whole story if they expect to regain the confidence of the American people.

There's nothing wrong with Washington news coverage that the newspapers themselves can't cure.

## Journalist and Journalese

BY CARTER BROOKE JONES

Carter Brooke Jones after a long service on newspapers in various cities is now literary critic of the *Washington Star*.

Most Washington correspondents learned the rudiments of their trade elsewhere. Naturally some grew up in our enormous, ponderous, humid, provincial capital, but relatively few.

Some of our most dignified and self-appreciated correspondents once were police reporters back in St. Paul or San Antonio or Bangor or Cleveland. There are those who under proper conditions at the Press Club taproom will relax to the extent of describing some of their early adventures on the home-town paper. Others prefer to forget these callow years. Yet every once and again one of our more austere political pundits runs smack into some home-towner he once was glad to know at city hall or police headquarters. Such an irreverent knew-him-when has been heard to exclaim over a grudgingly proffered highball:

"Well, well, Bill. I'd never have known you. If that outfit ain't class! By God, I'll bet you shave every day. And I never saw you with a shirt that clean except maybe on your day off when you were taking your girl out. I see your stuff sometimes. I don't always just get it. It ain't quite as clear as what you used to write when you went out with the boys on them vice raids. Remember the time . . ."

And the pundit leans over the table, hoping by lowering his voice to hush the raucous tones of his visitor's reminiscences. The host has always been vague about his earlier years, with ambiguous references to assignments abroad and postgraduate courses. And now this heel has to come along and . . .

Something happens to reporters when they come to Washington. Not right away, but in time. They soon find that the breezy ways of Spokane or Dallas or Atlanta won't do at the great white throne of Government. As the years pass and their papers or press associations give them increasing responsibilities they stiffen slowly from reporter into correspondent, from person into personage. Some emerge from shirttail-outers into stuffed shirts. They become not only as carefully tailored as somebody out of the State Department, but their demeanor and their copy are as meticulously stylized. They no longer can afford to associate with just anybody, and they don't write stories. They pronounce judgment, prophesy, and pontificate.

These solemn commentators on the national scene would hate to be shown some of their early copy back in Dubuque or Fresno. They'd find they used the sort of journalese professors of journalism and other critics have been trying for years to proscribe. No doubt they wrote plenty about torso slayers and sex fiends and had their local cops throwing out many a dragnet and drawing cordons through which the bandits always managed to slip. Today they scorn such vulgar writing; they are Washington correspondents. But at least in the old days their readers understood them.

Some years ago you'd find such correspondents in morning coats and striped trousers, complete with spats and sticks, undistinguishable from the Minister of Ruritania. They still sport such clothes when they are *au fait*, but, since men's dress has grown increasingly informal, they are more apt these days to be seen in double-breasted suits with conservative stripes or in the sort of sport jackets *Esquire* and the *New Yorker* admit to the canon.

Let's take a look at one of the more august of these super-journalists. He is L. Sparkenborough Smythe. He is Washington correspondent for the Epic City *Windjammer*, one of the most influential papers in the Middle West. There was a time when he was police reporter on the *Gazette* in the smaller town of Nostalgia. He was known then as Lem Smith, and he played pinochle with the cops and wrote about stark tragedies and blond nudes found in alleys and murders that baffled crack detectives. But don't remind him of those days. He won't like it.

Now Mr. Smythe is a member of the Gridiron Club, a past president of the National Press Club, a member of the Alfalfa Club and of heaven knows what else. He and his wife play bridge with an Assistant Secretary of State and ministers from two of the smaller South American countries and their respective wives. Time was when Mr. Smythe's clothes looked as if he'd not slept well in them, and he always needed a haircut. You should see him today. His eldest son is at Groton and headed straight for Harvard if he isn't detoured into Reform School. His wife, who used to have the staff of the *Nostalgia Gazette* in for poker and drinks, has no time for newspapermen or their wives—except, of course, certain ones.

Well, this is a typical day. Mr. Smythe has a press conference he feels he'd better cover (he now says "attend"). He could send Jimmy, his assistant in the bureau, the sharp young man who will get somewhere if he can just forget he's not in Epic City covering city hall. But Mr. Smythe is not one to shirk duty, especially when he can't think of anything else to write that day.

The correspondent arrives late—he makes that a point: you must never be too eager—and finds the Secretary answering questions about crop estimates and plans for price stabilization. "Sparky," as he is called by some friends without an appreciation of his importance, pulls out a leather-bound notebook (he used to carry a wad of copy paper) and a gold pencil. He listens for some time, or appears to, and then asks a question which has been covered three times, once since he came in. Finally when the conference is stalled Mr. Smythe clears his throat and ponders.

"Now, Mr. Secretary, I take it that if a crop—we'll say corn, which is very important in my part of the country—and assume that the seasonal price is below last year's parity, which was somewhat higher than the prevailing market price plus parity in the world market in the typical year, which, I believe, was 1938—or was it 1928? Anyway, would you say that the government in that event should undertake to stabilize the price by maintaining parity, provided it is no higher than the stabilizing price agreed upon the previous year, minus the difference between the top price and/or the low price during the typical year?"

"I'm afraid," replies the Secretary, "I don't quite get you, Smythe."

"Never mind," Smythe says magnanimously, "I think I catch the drift."

Well, farm stuff is always for page one in Epic City, and so L. Sparkenborough Smythe, back at his office in the National Press Building, turns out a piece. He writes:

"Good news for Middle Western farmers can be reported authoritatively today by this correspondent, although the favorable development necessarily is tempered by world-market conditions and the usual parity formula. This does not necessarily spell out a higher price for corn, and yet informed sources are inclined to optimism rather than pessimism, depending, of course, on the actual crop as contrasted with the forecast.

"This correspondent has learned through a searching investigation at the Department of Agriculture—the disclosure of matters still officially secret—that the price of corn will be bolstered by the government if, as now is anybody's guess, there is an oversupply of feed and livestock prices do not hold up to last year's parity.

"It can be revealed exclusively by the *Windjammer's* Washington bureau that the Secretary has agreed to uphold parity under certain specified and uncertain conditions. Though he was reluctant to talk, he has made known his attitude in official circles. It was further learned . . ."

In Epic City the managing editor of the *Windjammer* reads Mr. Smythe's dispatch to an accompaniment of profanity. He reluctantly takes it up to the composing room, remarking to the make-up editor, "I guess Sparky can't help it. It's the way those damned bureaucrats think and talk. But I'm damned if I understand this story. Maybe some farmers will, though I doubt it like hell."

"If you ask me," the make-up editor retorts, "I don't think Sparky can write any other way, no matter what they tell him. He's gone Washington entirely. I knew him when he was still Lem Smith and covered police for the *Gazette* down in Nostalgia. When he wrote a piece in those days at least you knew who got himself shot and who the cops picked up. I'd hate to turn him

loose on a good murder now. He'd probably tell you everything but what happened to the corpse, where it was found, and what name it went under."

Mind you, I don't mean to contend that all Washington correspondents are like Sparkenborough Smythe, that all of them go high-hat and turn pontifical. There are among them some delightful fellows, essentially unchanged by the formalism of Washington's marble corridors and personalities. Some, moreover, grasp complex subjects and explain them in clear prose. There remain, however, too many like Sparky, who easily can confuse the simplest issue and can clutter up the intricate any time.

The journalistic clichés of other cities are not much used in Washington. We don't have many scandals involving millionaire playboys, and it's not often that a broker is sued by "the blond problem in his life." But there is a Washington journalese, dreadful in its ponderous attachment to words like "pronouncement" and "protocol" and "allocation" and "agenda" and "priority." Some correspondents can never mention what a department is spending without calling it a departmental expenditure. To others a Treasury report is always "a summary of the current fiscal situation."

On the other hand some phrases minted by political reporters and congressional correspondents are pungent and have become worthy additions to the language.

What could be more expressive than "a decision reached in a smoke-filled room"? This apparently dates back to the Republican National Convention of 1920 which nominated Warren G. Harding for President, though it may have been used earlier. At least it will always be associated with the Harding nomination.

Not all the new terms that came from Washington correspondents and caught the public fancy were originated by them. Some came from political leaders with an ear for phrases.

President Theodore Roosevelt put a number of phrases into circulation, if he did not originate them. Some like "hat in the ring" to designate an announced office seeker survive. Others like "big stick"<sup>1</sup> have passed into that innocuous desuetude which (as a phrase) Grover Cleveland inflicted on the public. The term "trust

<sup>1</sup>In foreign relations "speak softly, but carry a big stick."

buster" had a heavy run during the first Roosevelt's administration, but, according to Henry L. Mencken in the *American Language*, Supplement 2 (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948), it dates back to 1877.

Woodrow Wilson was a phrasemaker, but usually his phrases (for example, "open covenants, openly arrived at," or "little group of willful men") were too intellectual to circulate through saloons and billiard halls and get into everyday language. President Harding, who had been a small-town editor, had the literary touch of a writer of government directives, but he added one frightful word to our vocabulary: "normalcy." As a general term normalcy was at best obsolete. Funk & Wagnalls' New Standard Dictionary says it is a term "used specifically in mathematics." The noun had been "normality" for perhaps a century. But first Washington correspondents, then editorial writers, then biographers and novelists took up normalcy. It persists.

The phrase "White House spokesman" apparently first got into Washington dispatches during the Harding administration, but came into general use during the succeeding administration of Calvin Coolidge.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Harding after some unfortunate experiences in impromptu answers at press conferences became cagey. Mr. Coolidge took no more chances with the press than he did with the other vexations of office. The public never knew that the alert White House spokesman who gave out information surprisingly accurate was the President himself.

Franklin D. Roosevelt gave journalism and the country at large a whole set of phrases. "Forgotten man," "economic royalist," "spending to save," "social security," "arsenal of democracy" are a few that came out of the New Deal. No matter at the moment how many Mr. Roosevelt actually invented and how many were materialized by his hovering battalion of ghosts.

"White House spokesman" and other subterfuges faded in the tenure of Roosevelt II. It became the custom to quote what the President said at press conferences, though without quotation

<sup>2</sup>This is the best recollection of John Russell Young, one of the founders of the National Press Club, a veteran White House reporter for the Washington *Star*, later a commissioner of the District of Columbia.



marks unless a direct quote was authorized. This plan was continued into the Truman administration. Such face-savers as "a White House source" or "a source close to the Administration" no longer were needed. If you got a news item from a White House secretary you quoted him. Life was simpler for White House reporters—at least their writing chores were.

But some of the biggest Washington stories, perhaps most of them, do not develop at the White House. They break on Capitol Hill or at the various departments and the innumerable agencies. Government executives, members of Congress, their aides and counselors often fear for political or personal reasons to announce such news, but will tip it off to their favorites in the press corps. Thus the persistence of such phrases as "it was learned from a well-informed source" or "according to an Administration spokesman who cannot be identified."

Authoritative circles continue to whirl. It may be wondered sometimes whether they do not revolve in the reporter's head. And perhaps many a correspondent fails to name "sources that cannot be disclosed" because he hasn't the dimmest notion where they are. When a columnist wants to do a little single-handed prophesying he often strikes out defensively. "It will be denied, but . . ." He seldom fails: it generally is denied.

Has journalese changed so much? Well, Washington stories are qualified in much the way they were fifty years ago. The Venezuelan dispute of 1895, it will be recalled, involved Great Britain and the United States in a diplomatic brawl in the course of which President Cleveland sharply invoked the Monroe Doctrine. The *Washington Star*, trying to follow the row from day to day, reported on page one, April 29, 1895, that "no official light was thrown on the Venezuelan situation today. Information, more or less authentic, continues to circulate through diplomatic channels. One report that is said to be reliable is that positive assurances have been given the Administration that the British forces will withdraw from Venezuelan territory as soon as the [proposed] indemnity of \$75,000 [sic!] shall have been collected. The President spent the day at the White House and had no callers of importance up to two o'clock."

Could any correspondent of today have done any better—or any worse?

The harassed newspaper copyreader (it might be explained for the benefit of the general reader that he has to write headlines) has been forced to develop an argot of his own. Since he must describe the story in words that fit arbitrarily into certain space—so many units consisting of letters and spaces governed by unyielding metal for each head—he necessarily has had to evolve a sort of shorthand. Thus “probe” fits where “inquiry” wouldn’t. “Solon” can be squeezed in where “lawmaker” or “legislator” never could be. “Cops” (shunned by the more dignified journals) just fills a head which “police” would overflow. “Ban” as a noun or a verb in any tense is a convenient word.

Headwriters undoubtedly have contributed more words to journalese than they have absorbed from reporters. Writers are prone to adopt headlines in their copy. Thus “a ban on parking” has become a cliché originated on the copy desk out of necessity.

It was copyreaders’ luck to have the long name Roosevelt thrown at the front pages so often in the last half century. But they got around that. The first Roosevelt became “T. R.” not only to newspaper readers, but to the general public. Indeed no one can say how much this intimate contraction of his name had to do with his election and his popularity for the rest of his life. Teddy was a versatile writer. He should have paused somewhere to indite an apostrophe to copyreaders. Roosevelt II inevitably became F. D. R.

The sports writers so immortalized the late Christy Matthewson as “Big Six” (originally “big six-footer”) that the papers once reported that a letter addressed simply with a huge figure six had been delivered to the pitcher without delay. Such phrases as “Manassa Mauler” and “Brown Bomber,” which emerged from sports-department typewriters, always will identify for ring fans the champions who wore these *noms de guerre*.

Once in what may be called euphemistically some years back I worked for the Associated Press. It is still an organization of ponderable dignity. Then it was Olympian in its austerity. Under Melville Stone and Frederick Roy Martin slang was forbidden. It

was recognized that there were certain trade names in sports. A two-base hit was a two-bagger. Very well. But call it a double-sacker—well, you'd better not. A strike-out was never a fan-out or a whiff-out, and if you called home run a circuit clout you'd likely get a message from the control point cautioning you against such vulgarities. But the worst thing the AP ever did (long before my time) was to refer to a certain character as "John Johnson, pugilist." His name wasn't John—it was Arthur—but he fought under the name of Jack Johnson. And once the New York *Times* quoted Governor Al Smith as having said "bologna," which all the world knew he had not. But those days are long gone, and today AP sports writers torture the language as cheerfully as anyone in an effort to write colorfully.

The police reporter has done his share as an innovator. Mr. Mencken points out<sup>3</sup> that more than a few expressions like "big shot" apparently originated in the city room, not the underworld.<sup>4</sup>

The news weeklies—meaning chiefly *Time*, which was the model for others—have had a profound and dreadful effect on journalism. *Time's* concisions (well, why not?) have been copied and imitated to shameful proportions. That word "jampack" is only one of many that reporters refuse to forget. *Time's* way of writing also has had a degenerative influence on the press in general. What I shall call its nonsequitur style has become a bible for the young men of the United Press who try so desperately to write cleverly and show up the AP. *Time* writes, "Thin, long-nosed Henry L. Wilmerdich has developed a new remedy for hives." And the UP says: "Elongated, affable Senator Vandenberg (R., Mich.) introduced a bill today which would reduce the excise tax on linseed oil under certain conditions."<sup>5</sup>

Journalism like most trades has its inner argot. The public knows what "scoop" and "beat" mean. Hollywood has taught everyone, just as it has shown what newspapermen are like: a bunch of ill-mannered, slovenly drunks who carry big notebooks and at least

<sup>3</sup>Henry L. Mencken. *American Language*. Supplement 2. 1948.

<sup>4</sup>Al Capone was quoted as saying he called his mob a "syndicate" after reading the term in the papers.

<sup>5</sup>Hypothetical but typical quotations.

once a day tell the managing editor to go to hell, who spend most of their time in bistros, and yet who leap into action at the scent of a story and turn out brilliant copy.

The public, however, is not familiar with the initials "B O M." It means "business office must," and it means what it says: get that into the paper or else. It usually is an announcement of plans to celebrate the golden jubilee of Shiffenheffer's Department Store or something of similar import.

Nor does a "lead" mean anything to newspaper readers. It is, however, a shibboleth of newspapermen comparable in importance to a doctor's prescription or a lawyer's mispronunciation of certain Latin phrases. A lead is the beginning of a story, especially the first paragraph. Reporters would spend hours, if it were not for deadlines, polishing up leads. They are written primarily for other newspapermen. They must be, for the public, I've always been convinced, does not give a single damn how a story starts so long as it finds out within a reasonable time what happened.

I emerged from a curtailed<sup>6</sup> course in journalism and took my first newspaper job with the fixed idea, imparted by some misguided teacher, that no lead should begin with "a," "an," or "the." The way I maltreated the parts of speech trying to avoid those simple and natural beginnings! Finally I decided it was, like a lot of other things I'd been told, malarkey, and I dropped the practice. I don't think any paper bothers with such an absurd taboo any more. But reporters still struggle with leads, hammering out flamboyant announcements of murder, rape, and Presidential proclamation, all wasted on the readers they are presumed to write for.

I do not wish from whatever I've said to convey the notion that I do not think newspaper writing has improved. I think it has decidedly, though there is some journalistic writing of one hundred years ago that we could not improve on. Many particularly worn phrases have dropped out. The best writers instinctively avoid the most hackneyed words. Yet, with edition time moving toward you like a crouching panther you can't altogether avoid falling back on the ready-made patterns of expression. And I doubt that Old Subscriber would want you to. There is much in

<sup>6</sup>At the request of the college.

the newspaper of today to encourage those who love a simple, serviceable English (or American).

If reporters would just quit saying *everything* "spreads like wild-fire" and calling a fight "an altercation" . . . But I can hear the referee yelling, "Break!" I've been hitting in the clichés long enough.

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